

# New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire



*Edited by*

Ana de Francisco Heredero,  
David Hernández de la Fuente  
and Susana Torres Prieto

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P U B L I S H I N G

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## EDITORS' NOTE

All transliterations of Greek proper names have been made according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan) 1991-2005. In the case of Greek names not appearing in the Dictionary, the same rules have been followed for the transliteration of Greek, except in those names more widely accepted in other Latinised forms. In case of proper names from other languages, the criteria of each individual author have been followed.

## PREFACE

ROSA SANZ SERRANO

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The IV International Conference “New Perspectives on Late Antiquity. From the Frontiers to the New Rome: profiles of the Eastern Empire”, held jointly at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) and the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), between Madrid at Segovia (Spain), on October 24-26, 2012, focused on various historical and cultural aspects of the Eastern Roman Empire and, specifically, on the dynamics between the Eastern capital, Constantinople, and the boundaries of the Empire. This symposium was a continuation of others previously organised on different subjects by the academic society *Barbaricvm*, established within the framework of the Department of Ancient History of UCM, and the International Centre for Late Antique Studies ‘Theodosius the Great’ (UNED Segovia). *Barbaricvm* is a research group devoted to promoting and developing historical research, specifically on the dialectics between concepts such as “Barbarism” and “Civilization”, particularly in Late Antiquity, by organising activities such as the series of conferences entitled “New Perspectives on Late Antiquity”, or the International Conference “Tempus Barbaricvm. El Imperio y las Hispanias al final de la Antigüedad”, held in Madrid in 2011. The ‘Theodosius the Great’ Centre for Late Antique Studies at UNED Segovia, with participation of the Department of Ancient History of UNED, has hosted several academic seminars and research activities from 2009, such as the conferences “New Perspectives on Late Antiquity”.

Studies on the Roman East are many and diverse in their approaches, which is the reason why an attempt has been made in the present volume to present some of the most relevant and current interests among specialists. For contemporaries, the Eastern Empire represented the last stronghold, the reference point of the ancient splendour of the Roman world in the West when the former provinces were transformed into the new Germanic kingdoms. Constantinople, and the provinces ruled by its court, served as a factor of cohesion and assurance in a hostile environment where foreigners and barbarism constantly threatened its

borders, endangering its unity and the permanence of structures created by Rome, although these were already very weak in the last centuries of its history. The “New Rome” neither escaped the internal problems that *Roma Aeterna* had had to overcome for centuries (and which were replicated in the new *pars Imperii*), nor learned to successfully manage its relationships with cultures and peoples at its boundaries and beyond them, neither in its Western part, nor within the borders of either their African provinces, such as the Cyrenaica, or in the Euphrates or the Black Sea. Attempts made by Eastern emperors to effectively control the borders meant – as it had been the case of Western emperors before them – being overwhelmed by adverse developments of the system itself, a heavy burden to the stability of the Empire, and, eventually, these very attempts prompted a number of important changes in the structures of the government, in the economy and in Roman society. These attempts turned it into a fragile and sensitive State in terms of its relations with the outside world, and forced it to face the question of its survival. Once again, the *limes* and their peripheries were decisive elements of change, and became also strong destabilising factors, while acting at the same time as political underpinnings of their rulers.

The Eastern Empire did not elude its destiny by defending itself against the process of Barbarisation that was threatening Western provinces with the arrival of peoples from the Rhine and the Danube, whom the Empire believed to have got rid of. Empires include peripheral territories difficult to control, where population flows determine important changes by imposing and surpassing the control of governments. The East could not survive the fall of the West, partly because it repeated the same errors of Western emperors, and also because it trusted that the situation at its boundaries, and that of their own citizens, had little or nothing in common with the other part of the Empire. Attempts of influencing Western Germanic states across the Mediterranean, which at certain times became true dreams of reconquest and recovery of lost Roman territories, are, on the one hand, actually part of the massive recovery effort of a non-existent Empire and, on the other, the development of forms of state following an inefficient tradition which was out of order at its time. Both the new aristocracy of Germanic origin, well established in the West, as well as new populations from steppes and deserts that threatened the Eastern provinces were important determinants of the policy developed by the Eastern Empire but, at the same time, they meant the decline of its hegemony mirage in the former Western Roman territory. Neither the skirmishes in Western territories, nor the development of major diplomacy in its relations with the neighbouring states of West and East, nor attempts

to control the Mediterranean, nor the Byzantine currency strength in international markets, nor the influence of intellectuals and Christian missionaries could finally overthrow Western Germanic kingdoms: they could neither stop the push of others threatening its cities and borders, nor the ambitions of their provincial aristocracies and imperial judges.

The present monograph, despite stemming from the 2010 conference, has become an independent collective academic endeavour. The fourth conference on Late Antiquity gathered specialists from Spanish and other European universities with the aim of exchanging views and discussing various historical and cultural aspects of the Late Eastern Roman Empire, as well as its relations with its enduring provinces, the ancient Roman provinces of the West and the barbarian kingdoms installed in them. Some papers presented new documentation on topics that, especially in the field of archaeology, are subject to various interpretations, thus opening new paths for study in certain areas. Others made critical revisions of documentation already known, either offering alternatives to concepts, models and paradigms conventionally accepted, or raising new interpretations of known sources. This volume is structured as collection of what has been called ‘a portrait’ and four thematic sections consisting of various contributions (see “Table of Contents”).

Within the general framework of the Eastern Empire in Late Antiquity, contributions to this collective volume address some of the problems that Eastern emperors had to face both outside and inside their borders. David Álvarez Jiménez presents an analysis of the text by John Malalas about pirate activities and other bandit acts as a result of the revolt of the circus factions in Constantinople in 565, showing different forms of internal violence in which populations were involved due to riots revealing social unrest. As another form of violence, Ana de Francisco Heredero focuses on the role of local aristocracies in defending Eastern provinces, specifically focusing on Synesios of Cyrene and the creation and use of private armies as a mechanism to counter Berber incursions from the periphery into the cities and villages of the Cyrenaica. It is precisely the political role of the bishop, and not his religious role previously studied by other specialists, that is highlighted.

Economic and legal aspects of the time are also discussed in the present volume. José María Blanch Nogués presents a detailed study on the characteristics and development of the *collatio lustralis* tax introduced by Emperor Constantine for *negotiatores* and general traders, that became in later decades one of the most questionable and unpopular taxes. The author also proposes that maintenance costs could have caused the Empire to be beset by continual bankruptcy, due to enormous court expenses and a

militaristic boundary policy, and therefore to be in bad need of a strong fiscal control over the province populations and the profits generated by trade. The study by Juan J. Ferrer-Maestro focuses on fiscal problems upon the analysis of some specific examples of tax abuses and pressure exerted by the state on farming and trading populations all over the Empire, and particularly on price speculation and currency devaluation that plunged the provinces on a very sharp inflation process, which became eventually unbearable for lower classes. Also in relation to the economic aspects of the Eastern Empire, the contribution of Ángel del Río Alda analyses a little-known information of Timotheos of Gaza – a contemporary of the Eastern Emperor Anastasios – gathered in his *Libri de Animalibus*, concerning the arrival at Constantinople of an elephant and two giraffes from India. The author connects this fact with the existence of an “incense route” that he reconstructs in an original and suggestive way, and that must have been into operation at a time well before the narrated anecdote, which, as late as in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it must have been still a busy route and one of the main *foci* of trade with India. Aside from these economic overviews, the study by Elena Quintana Orive refers to a specific law from the Theodosian Code concerning the social and legal status of theatre actors in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. She thoroughly analyses the characteristics of this law, its formal aspects and provisions regarding actors, who, at the time under study, began to be appreciably affected by anti-pagan policies of Christian emperors, inspired by the attacks which members of this profession were subject to by Christian intellectuals and priests.

The present volume also includes a series of studies on religious aspects specific to the time. The first one, by Carmen Blázquez Pérez, is devoted to the beginnings of Christianity in Petra and in the southern region of Jordan, based upon archaeological evidence. Thus, she presents a detailed study of the first churches built in the Nabataean territory in Byzantine times, similar to those in Madaba, Mount Nebo and Umm ar-Rasas, but located in the north-south axis from Aqaba to Hawara, Petra or Phaino, following the famous *Via Nova Traiana*, where the author acknowledges the phenomenon is less well known than in close regions, such as the Holy Land. Clelia Martínez Maza has carried out an extensive tour of religious conflicts that took place in Egypt in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, presenting the main legal sources on the persecution of pagans, more specifically the religious policy of emperors and city magistrates, as well as the involvement of monks in the destruction of the main pagan temples in major cities. The author uses an important collection of sources which, as a whole, allows us to analyse this phenomenon with new

perspectives, focusing more specifically on the question of the death of Hypatia and on the various versions we have about this shocking fact. Conversely, Ángel Narro approaches the Christian environments of 5<sup>th</sup> century Seleukeia through the narration of the priest, reputedly the author of the *Life and Miracles of Saint Thekla*, focusing on the construction of churches and altars dedicated to the saint both inside and outside the city, as well as the saint's miracles and other hagiographical aspects composing her figure. All these elements would also allow us to reflect upon the social and religious environment of the city at that time. Related to the adoption of Christian monotheism by Emperor Constantine, Juan Signes has conducted an interesting study on the term "Commonwealth", a denomination coined by Slavic historians that is partly used in current historiography, in order to refer to this new religious policy of the Eastern Empire. For some scholars, particularly for Garth Fowden, there exists the aspiration of creating a culturally homogenous political world of universal nature over the social and ideological pluralism that composed the Byzantine Empire. This aspiration reached its zenith in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as it was defined at the Council of Chalcedon, and lasted until the arrival of Islam in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. But the disappearance of the Empire did not end with the concept, and so we are able to identify a second stage in the Slavic ideological organisation. As for the rise of Islam and its militarised extension, we find a line of study that enhances the investigation of the interaction of the Eastern Empire with its borders. As Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis defends, it is clear that the history of the Muslim conquests is an integral part of the war between Byzantium and Persia.

Focusing on the new capital of the Eastern Empire, José Luis Cañizar Palacios takes a tour of the changes experienced by the city of Constantinople and presents, contrary to traditional historiography, the interesting theory that many 4<sup>th</sup> century sources, especially Ammianus Marcellinus, rejected the idea of considering the new capital as the new Rome – even for some of them, particularly historians of pagan origin, the ancient capital of the Empire remained the undisputed centre of power at this time – to the point that Constantinople was qualified in these circles by the term "*vetus Byzantium*", a way to remember its historical past as a Greek colony and its recent conversion as the capital. Meanwhile, in a similar line of research, Susana Torres Prieto presents an analysis of the fall of Constantinople and the existence of a relationship with the emergence of the myth of Moscow as the "Third Rome".

In a parallel line of research, Fotini Hadjittofi approaches the study of Greek rhetoric and the Third Sophistic, which evidences the important cultural and intellectual changes of the time, specially the increasing

stratification of society. She analyses the changes in 4<sup>th</sup> century discourses, taking as an example Himerios' *Oratio* 41 addressed to emperor Julian during his stay in Constantinople in 361. Continuing with contemporary literary aspects, David Hernández de la Fuente examines the transformation of the aesthetic principles of early Byzantine arts and the interaction between poetry and philosophy in the literature of the Eastern Empire through the work of some poets of the so-called Nonnian School: among others Nonnos himself, John of Gaza, and George of Pisidia, who praises Emperor Herakleios campaigns and is also the author of important works in verse, showing a remarkable philosophical background and a rich classical tradition. On a different field, Isabel Moreno has made a very thorough analysis of the idea of the East in Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res Gestae*, specifying the content of reality and fiction that exists in the author's discourse, and suggesting the possibility of a strong ideological baggage, which is attributable to ideas prevailing in the Western empire, dominated by traditional literature in both the imaginary, ideology and vocabulary.

The opening section named "A portrait" contains a detailed key-note study by Enrico Livrea on one of the last main pagan figures of the Eastern Empire in Late Antiquity: Pamprepios of Panopolis, a poet and politician at the court of Emperor Zeno. This character was an active witness of the social and economic crisis affecting the Eastern Empire, and was actively involved in the struggle for power in the imperial court to the point of being involved in the usurpation of Leontios, loading with special literary significance the narration of the taking of the Papirios fortress by the Imperial army, occupied by the usurper in 484. His adventures and his verses are an emblematic token of this time of change and this historical and philological portrait may be used as a symbol of the Eastern Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.

Last, as an epilogue to this monograph, José María Blázquez Martínez, from the Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid), presents a general overview of the some of the latest theories about the fall of the Western Empire and its consequences for the stability of the Eastern provinces, as well as the endurance of the structures of the Roman world in it.

All the above-mentioned studies provide this volume with a multidisciplinary approach thanks to the diversity of topics included, but without losing its cohesion and the initial purpose of publication: presenting new perspectives to study the most controversial and determinant factors in the history of the Eastern empire in Late Antiquity through specific and innovative works, but without abdicating from the outlook that any publication of this type should offer its readers.

**I.**

**A PORTRAIT**



# THE LAST PAGAN AT THE COURT OF ZENO: POETRY AND POLITICS OF PAMPREPIOS OF PANOPOLIS

ENRICO LIVREA  
UNIVERSITÀ DI FIRENZE

Let us witness the final act of a sombre Byzantine tragedy. The date: the end of November, 484 A.D. The place: the castle of Papirios, customarily identified with the ruins of Çandır-Kalesi, on the slopes of the Taurus range, 40 km. to the north of Tarsus, in S.E. Anatolia (the area is sometimes called Armenian Cilicia)<sup>1</sup>. A gruesome spectacle is being played out before the eyes of the soldiers of the emperor Zeno who are laying siege to the fortress occupied by the usurper Leontios, by Illos, *magister militum per Orientem*, and by Verina, the dowager empress: the corpse of a swarthy-skinned man<sup>2</sup>, whose head had been hoisted up on the ramparts as a macabre trophy, was hurled down from the castle battlements on to the sharp rocks which surround the fortress on every side<sup>3</sup>. The reports of this ghastly end will re-echo throughout the contemporary world, and

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<sup>1</sup> I accept the identification of Gottwald 1936, 86-100, to whom we are indebted for the recognition and description of the site. Dam. E 174 Z. = 114 A A. is to be identified with it: ἡ πέτρα αὐτὴ τὰ μὲν ἄνωθεν ἐκπεπετασμένη πολὺ εἰς εὖρος, τὰ δὲ κάτωθεν ἀποστενουμένης τοσοῦτον ὅσον ὑπερῆδειν τὴν ἐπικρεμαμένην εὐρύτητα μετέωρον, πολλαχῆ ὑπερέχουσαν τῆς ὑποκειμένης καὶ ἀνεχούσης κρηπίδος ὀρείας· εἰκάσεις ἂν αὐχένι μεγάλῳ φέροντι κεφαλὴν ὑπερμεγέθη τινὰ καὶ ἀξιοθέατον. I am not convinced by Hild and Hellenkemper V, 1, 373-5, Abb. 331, who distinguish between a Papirawn and a Papirion; they identify the latter as the scene of the events we describe.

<sup>2</sup> For his 'typhonic' character, see *infra*, n. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Dam. fr. 115 C A.: ἀκοντίζει τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς τὸ τῶν πολεμίων στρατόπεδον, ἄνωθεν ἀπο τῆς πέτρας ἀποδισκεύσας. For this gruesome practice, frequently attested in Late Antique military triumphs, see Agosti 2012 on Nonn. *D.* 34. 226-48, 543-4. Pampreprios' corpse was experiencing the very same destiny of Pentheus' head, *D.* 46. 232: Lycurgus' palace bristles with cut heads, 20. 152-7, adding 36. 150.

will continue to resound in posterity with an intensity which proclaims the incident as the distinguishing leitmotif of a whole age and culture, embodied in the form of the individual whose colourful earthly career came to such an appalling end. This man, Pamprepios of Panopolis, played a leading role in the tortuous vicissitudes which plagued the reign of Zeno, and in the variety of his activities – cultural, political, military – he reflects, perhaps better than any other individual, the deep crisis and the contradictions of his turbulent age.

The sources which enable us to reconstruct the personality and the career of Pamprepios are unusually rich, and their abundance reflects the powerful fascination exerted by this charismatic individual. The *Suda* preserves for us a lengthy extract from the *Byzantine History* of Malchos, a contemporary of Pamprepios; in addition to this there is a most unusual document, a horoscope cast by the Egyptian Rhetorios in the sixth century, cryptically entitled *Γένεσις γραμματικοῦ*; it was clearly a *post eventum* composition which, as Delatte and Stroobant<sup>4</sup> have established, retraces, with precise chronological accuracy, every stage of Pamprepios' life. The surviving fragments of the *Life of Isidore* by the Neoplatonist Damaskios of Damascus, the last head of the Athenian school, are of primary importance, and have been reconstituted in the excellent, albeit different, editions of Zintzen and Athanassiadi: the lost biography of the sage can, for the numerous sections in which Pamprepios is mentioned, be reconstructed from the extracts of it in Photios (= E), and by the use made of it in the *Suda*. These are supplemented by sources which, though less important in both qualitative and quantitative terms, are by no means negligible, such as the article 'Pamprepios' in Hesychios of Miletus, (reproduced in the *Suda*), Malalas, John of Antioch (recently edited by Roberto and Mariev: in the 7<sup>th</sup> century this historian could draw heavily on the *Isaurica* of Kandidos the Isaurian, a contemporary of Pamprepios), Theophanes of Mytilene, the *Church History* of the monophysite Zacharias Rhetor, and Joshua Stylite<sup>5</sup>.

What emerges from combining these various and often contradictory pieces of evidence is, broadly speaking, a figure who, apart from his

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<sup>4</sup> Delatte-Stroobant 1923, 58-76; for a partial English translation see Neugebauer-Van Hoesen 1959, Nr. L 440, 140-1, 187-8 : it must be remembered that Rhetorius' text is, especially towards the end, a summary of a more extensive *Vorlage*: cf. also Pingree 1976, 144-47.

<sup>5</sup> The fullest selection is to be found in Livrea's edition (1979), 1-9: 'Testimonia selecta de Pamprepii vita et scriptis'; unfortunately none of the historians who have dealt with Pamprepios has been aware of this.

fundamental political role, can be described as emblematic of the literary phenomenon of late antiquity that Alan Cameron<sup>6</sup> has aptly styled ‘the wandering poets’: the last flowering of ‘pagan’ poetry, originating almost entirely in Egypt<sup>7</sup>, from where it spread, with its features unchanged, to every part of the Empire. The representatives of this movement are on the whole vigorous upholders of the pagan outlook, of ‘Hellenism’, in an empire where non-adherence to Christianity is by now a crime which is, at best, tolerated. Despite their courageous profession of an unfashionable faith, they are in general very close to the holders of power, for whom they represent – thanks to their skilful and uninhibited use of such literary tools as encomium and *ψόγος* (one need think only of Claudian) – a subtle and versatile means of moulding and influencing public opinion among the classes who mattered most in social and economic terms. These poets are equipped with a rich and sensitive knowledge of classical literature: indeed, the sources refer to them as *γραμματικοί*, implying a rigorous education in the grammatico-rhetorical tradition, which is fully borne out by their surviving works, e.g. Triphiodoros’ *Capture of Troy*, the sprawling *Dionysiaka* of Nonnos, Musaeus’ epyllion *Hero and Leander*, and *The Seizure of Helen* of Kollouthos. Frequently they are *docti sermonis utriusque linguae*, and are almost always travelling in various parts of the empire to offer their undoubted talents to the service of the highest bidder.

All, or practically all, of the characteristics just listed are to be found in Pamprepios: born on 29 September 440 in the Thebaid of Egypt in Panopolis, the same city that gave birth to Nonnos, Pamprepios was doubtless able to benefit from the renaissance of classical studies in Egypt and channel his youthful poetic talent into the new modes and forms that his master Nonnos was formulating<sup>8</sup>. Pamprepios would have certainly,

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<sup>6</sup> Cameron 1965, 470-509: his identification of Theagenes as Pamprepios’ *patronus* seems to me the very reverse of ‘hinfällig’, as Feld 2002, 275 puts it. Cameron modified his interpretation, maintaining (Cameron 2007, 21-46) that most poets from Egypt were Christian.

<sup>7</sup> See Miguélez Cavero 2008, 33-79 for an updated list of papyri (Pamprepios on p. 72-4, 83-5). The best summary is to be found in Agosti 2012, 361-404 (with full bibliography).

<sup>8</sup> If my reconstruction of Nonnos’ chronology (repeated in my ed. of the *Paraphrasis of St John’s Gospel, book 2* (Bologna, 2000, 56) is sound, we can neither confirm nor deny the possibility that Pamprepios may have met his master (who was about 40 years his senior) at Panopolis or at Alexandria, in his youth, before his journey to Athens. What is certain is that nearly all the lines attributed to

beyond doubt, studied in Alexandria as well, where he may have known Hermias, with whom he later sought to compete during his stay in Athens, Dam. fr. 289 Z. = 112 B A. Ἀλεξανδρέως Ἐρμείου τοῦ ῥήτορος, ὃν τὸ κλέος ὑπερβαλεῖν ἐσπουδάκει τῆς πολυμαθίας. The sources speak of Pamprepios' being active as a schoolmaster – γραμματιστής or γραμματικός – just like Callimachus<sup>9</sup>; and since they emphasise his humble economic circumstances<sup>10</sup>, one readily assumes that he made a living by employing his poetic abilities in the composition of eulogies of the great and the good<sup>11</sup>. His scholarly profession brought him, ἐκ πολλοῦ κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλήνων οἰκήσαντα (Joh. Ant. fr. 211.2 M. = 303.27 R. = 234 p. 458. 5-6 M.) ) first to Athens in 473: one of the attractions was the teaching of the great Proklos. If it is true that Proklos' school “se composait pour moitié de futurs philosophes, l'autre moitié groupait les auditeurs de passage”<sup>12</sup>, we might confidently assign Pamprepios to the latter group, along with Severianos of Damascus, Rufinus, Marcellinus, the patrician Anthemios, the future Western emperor (467-72), Flavius Illustis Pusaueus (consul 467, *praefectus praetorio Orientis* in 465 and 473), Flavius Mesius Phoebus Severus (consul in 470), Athenodoros and Zeno of Pergamon, Hilarius of Antioch. Hostile sources, such as Damaskios, accuse Pamprepios of being incapable of benefiting, even at a superficial level, from instruction in the teaching of Neoplatonism, except in its outward manifestations such as soothsaying and theurgy, but they are forced to concede that he made a name for himself as a poet and scholar, publishing a work on *Etymologies*; this, it may be conjectured, belonged to the lineage which goes back to its archetype in Plato's *Cratylus*, through

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Pamprepios are practically a cento of Nonnos' poetry (though not of the *Paraphrasis*). For some deviations from the iron laws of Nonnian metrics, see Calderón Dorda 1995, 349-61.

<sup>9</sup> Test. I Pfeiffer: πρὶν δὲ συσταθῆναι τῷ βασιλεῖ γράμματα ἐδίδασκεν ἐν Ἐλευσίῃ κωμῳδίῳ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας. I shall discuss below the extent to which this affinity with Callimachus was sensed and emphasized by Pamprepios himself.

<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to take seriously the claim of Rhet. 222.8ff.: τὴν πρώτην ἡλικίαν χαλεπὴν ἐκτήσατο, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ φυγὰς ἐν πολλοῖς τόποις ἐγένετο... καὶ ταῦτα μὲν περὶ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας μέχρι ἐτῶν κ' ἢ λ'. A thorough training in philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry presupposes rather a well-to-do family.

<sup>11</sup> On the genre of Late-Antique poetic biography, the opposite of contemporary (and highly successful) Christian hagiography, see the fundamental work of Agosti 2009, 20-36.

<sup>12</sup> See Saffrey 1990, 161 and above all Di Branco 2006, 157-79.

Pamphrepios' contemporaries Orion (Proklos' teacher)<sup>13</sup> and Horus of Alexandria, who taught in Constantinople. This work earned him nomination to a public chair in the Academy as well as the hand in marriage of a rich Athenian woman<sup>14</sup>. In reporting this fact Dam. fr. 178 Z. = 77 D A. cannot resist the opportunity to twist his knife in his *bête noire* Pamphrepios with his explanation of the latter's success: ἐπεὶ ὁ οὐκ εἰδὼς ἐν οὐκ εἰδόσι... πιθανώτερος ὑπάρχει (= Plat. *Gorg.* 459d), but he is forced to acknowledge (fr. 289 = E 168 Z. = 112 B A.) περὶ δ' οὖν τὴν ἄλλην προπαιδείαν οὕτω διεπονεῖτο καὶ ἐς τοσοῦτον διεγυμνάζετο ὁ Παμφρέπιος, ὥστε ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ λογιώτατος εἶναι ἔδοξε καὶ πολυμαθέστατος τῶν αὐτόθι παιδείας μετελιηχότων. The political and cultural life of Athens, so well outlined by Di Branco, was dominated by the patrician Theagenes, to whom we shall return. We cannot be certain about what led Theagenes to withdraw the protection he had accorded to Pamphrepios at a given moment (it may have been slanderous attacks from influential Christian groups; or Theagenes' conversion to Christianity<sup>15</sup>; or disagreements within the school with Marinos, Proklos' biographer). However that may be, in May 476 Pamphrepios had to leave Athens because of his patron's hostility. Later events such as the exiling of Proklos and the destruction of the Asclepieion in Athens lead one, when considering Pamphrepios' paganism, to make due allowance for the disapproval of Theagenes, now a Christian convert. On this hypothesis the much-debated evidence of Malchos (fr. 23 B.) διαβολῆς δὲ αὐτῷ πρὸς Θεαγένην τινὰ τῶν ἐκεῖ δυναμένων συστάσης, ὑβρισθεὶς ὑπ' ἐκείνου καὶ μείζονος ἢ ἐχρῆν διδάσκαλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πειραθεὶς σκευωρίας should be interpreted as "there was slander against him from Theagenes, one of the powerful figures there, and Pamphrepios was ill-treated by him and accused of a plot more

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<sup>13</sup> See F. Romano, 'Su Proclo lettore ed interprete del Cratilo', in Pépin-Saffrey 1987, 113-36.

<sup>14</sup> A poisoned sting must, I suspect, be detected in the words οἱ προβεβλημένοι τὴν γαμικὴν προβολήν in Dam. E 160 Z. = 103 B A. (the context is however exceedingly corrupt).

<sup>15</sup> He cannot properly be defined as a Christian without qualification, as do Kaster 1988, 332 and Feld 2002, 275 n.17; *PLRE* 2, 1064 *s.v.* is more balanced. In this connection I would stress the stormy relations between Theagenes and Marinos, cf. Dam. fr. 42, 144, 262, 275-6 Z. = 105 A-B A., which could cast light on those with Pamphrepios. See Hällström 1994, 152 and n. 2.

extensive than one would attribute to a professor”<sup>16</sup>. Immediately afterwards we find the banishment to Constantinople, where he sought a protector in the circles of the Isaurians (who dominated Zeno’s court) after the fall from power of the usurper Basiliskos, Verina’s brother, in the summer of 476<sup>17</sup> (Zeno himself was an Isaurian *parvenu* whose original name was Tarasicodissa Rusumbladeotou). Pamprepios was introduced to the powerful general Illos, a diophysite Christian with some Neoplatonic sympathies, the unofficial power-broker at Zeno’s court, a senator, *magister officiorum* in 477 and consul in 478, by a certain Marsos, a cultivated officer of Isaurian stock<sup>18</sup>. According to Malchos, Illos’ protection was secured by the success of the reading of a poem by Pamprepios (Malch. fr. 23 B. δημοσίᾳ ποίημα ἀναγνόντα<sup>19</sup>), whereas

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<sup>16</sup> The text seemed incomprehensible to Bernhardt in his edition of the *Suda* (Halle, 1843, 2.2.31): “cum autem in calumniationibus apud Theagenem illius loci magistratum delatus, et gravius quam magistrum deceret exagitatus fuisset, Byzantium venit.” For my part, I find Blockley’s rendering (1983, 453) also incomprehensible: “When an accusation was made against him before Theagenes, one of the authorities there, he was manhandled by him and because he had gained more recondite knowledge than was necessary for a teacher, he went to Byzantium.” Feld 2002, 262 in his turn was misled into further error by this translation: “weil dieser seiner Meinung nach mehr Wissen erlangt habe als für einen Lehrer notwendig gewesen sei.” It is not certain that Theagenes was archon in 476, as Di Branco 2006, 161 and n.303 would have it.

<sup>17</sup> For the letters immediately written by Zeno to Akakios, patriarch of Constantinople, and Simplicius, pope of Rome, see the documents collected by Lippold 1972, 163. It is typical of Simplicius that in his reply he exhorts Zeno to follow the example of Marcian and Leo by standing beside the *defensor fidei* in opposition to all heresy.

<sup>18</sup> On this Marsos, who was *magister officiorum* in 477, honorary consul in 478, cf. Dam. fr. 303 Z. = 115 A A., Joh. Ant. fr. 214.6 M. = 306. 48 R. = 237 p. 438. 9 M., Mal.5.14, Evagr. *HE* 3.27 Joh. Nikiou 88.76, Theoph. 5972, and see Feld 2005, 226-7. It cannot be fortuitous that Marsos too perished in the siege of the fortress of Papirios, displaying to the very end his loyalty to Illos’ cause and his attachment to his party.

<sup>19</sup> I anticipate my later discussion by suggesting that this unknown poem may have been of the kind we shall see below on fr. 3 of Pamprepios, which was certainly recited publicly before an audience whose generosity was being solicited (cf. lines 1 and 193). I find it much less likely, because of its presumed length, that the work recited was the *Isaurica* (a problem to which I shall return below).

Damaskios (fr. 178 Z. = 77 D A.) speaks of a discourse *On the Soul*<sup>20</sup> which must have won the admiration of his aristocratic audience.

This is not the right moment to locate Pamprepios' composition of the *Isaurica*: this would not have been a historical work in prose, as one might believe from Hesychios ap. *Suda* P 136=4.13,25-7 Adler Παμπρέπιος, Πανοπολίτης, ἐπῶν ποιητής, ἀκμάσας κατὰ Ζήωνα τὸν βασιλέα. ἔγραψεν Ἐτυμολογιῶν ἀπόδοσιν, Ἰσαυρικὰ καταλογάδην (the corrupt text must be patched up by accepting Bernhardt's transposition of the adverb), but an epic poem of a historical kind (I shall discuss its surviving fragments below).

Such cultural interests would be in no way surprising among the Isaurian elements at court, who must have been eager to foster cultural activities as a means to dispel their unsavoury reputation of being barbarian marauders. Leonadas, the philosopher who welcomed Proklos to Alexandria and adopted him into his family<sup>21</sup>, was an Isaurian; so was Superianos, a sophist who had been trained by Lachares, the pupil of Syrianos (Dam. fr. 140 Z. = 61 A.). There is also evidence of Isaurians showing an interest in poetry: see, e.g., the inscription on the base of a statue of Zeno in the nymphaeum of Sagalassos in Pisidia (Merkelbach-Stauber 4, 18/08/01, 118)<sup>22</sup>:

Ἡλίου ἀντολῆς ἠγήτορα καρτερόθυμον  
 Ζήωνα στήσεν ἔμπνοον ἦδε πόλις.  
 τεύχεσιν ἀστράπτει Ζήων θρασυκάραδιος ἀνήρ,  
 χάλκεος ἐν πολέμῳ, χρύσεος ἐν γραφίσι.

<sup>20</sup> Can it be a mere coincidence that a commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* is listed among the lost works of Marinus, Pamprepios' fellow-student at Proklos' school in Athens? One solitary fragment of it survives, in John Philoponos, *In de an.* 3.5 = *CAG* 15.535.5-8, 535.31-536.1, on which see Masullo 1985, 18-19. It is possible that Pamprepios' work contained passages of polemic against Marinus.

<sup>21</sup> See Marin. *VP* 8 Λεωνᾶς γοῦν ὁ σοφιστής, Ἰσαυρός, οἶμαι, τὸ γένος καὶ εὐδοκίμων ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ὁμοτέχων, οὐ μόνον αὐτῷ λόγων τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἐκοινώνησεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ σύνοικον ἔχειν ἠξίου καὶ συνδιατᾶσθαι γυναικὶ καὶ τέκνοις παρεσκεύασεν, οἷα παῖδα αὐτῷ γνήσιον καὶ τοῦτον γενόμενον. The same Leonadas will have introduced Proklos τοῖς τὰς ἡνίας ἔχουσι τῆς Αἰγύπτου, the same ruling class, educated and with Platonic leanings, that Pamprepios sought to ingratiate himself with some decades later.

<sup>22</sup> I reproduce Lanckoronski's text, with some certain orthographic corrections. It is not certain that the addressee of the epigram is Emperor Zeno: his general Zeno is another possibility.

Even more striking is the high quality of the dedicatory inscription (Merkelbach-Stauber 4, 19/05/02, 187), dated several decades before, of the restored marble floor of a public building (a palaestra, perhaps) in Seleukeia, commissioned by Paulina, the wife of this same Isaurian general Zeno (*magister militum per Orientem* 447-451, consul 448, *patricius* 451) whose prestige was so high among his countrymen<sup>23</sup> that the emperor chose to assume his name:

τειρόμενον δάπεδόν με χρόνων ὑπο πότνα γυναικῶν  
 πατρικία Ζήνωνος ἀρηϊφίλου παράκοιτις  
 Παυλίνα πραπίδεσσι κεκασμένη ἤδὲ καὶ ἔργοις  
 προφρονέως κόσμησε καὶ οὐκ ἀμέλησεν ἐμεῖο·  
 καὶ γὰρ ἐμὴν μεγάλην ὑπὸ γήραος ὄλεσα μορφήν·  
 νῦν δὲ χάριν πινυτῆς καὶ ἀμωμήτοιο γυναικός  
 κόσμοις μαρμαρέοισιν ἐπαστρέπτω πολὺ μᾶλλον,  
 ἦβης καὶ προτέρης ἐπέβην χαλεπὸν μετὰ γήρας.

Nor should we forget that also at Seleukeia Zeno had a church built in honour of the martyr St. Thekla, who had appeared to him in a vision and encouraged him to expel the usurper Basiliskos from the capital<sup>24</sup>. Consequently it is entirely natural that the Egyptian scholar, pagan though he was, impressed Illos favourably, who would have spent his time at the siege of Papirios reading! (Joh. Ant.fr. 214.6 M. = 306. 50-1 R. = 237 p. 438. 11 M.)<sup>25</sup>. However it may be, Pampreprios was honoured with the

<sup>23</sup> This Zeno must be the addressee of a letter from Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*ep.* 65). On the epigram cited here, see Şahin 1991, 155-56; Feissel 1999, 9-17, esp. 9-11, and, more generally on the “Gelehrsamkeit bei den Isauriern”, Feld 2005, 223-9. There are German translations in Şahin 1991, 156 and Feld 2005, 156, besides Merkelbach-Stauber *cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Euagr. *HE* 3.8, see Lippold 1972, 161. Monophysite though he was, it is impossible to deny Zeno’s personal piety (Lippold 1972, 201), or his belief that the *Henoticon* could really iron out the often bitter disagreements between the Chalcedonians and the Monophysites. Another saintly object of his veneration was Daniel Stylites: near his column at Telanissus in Syria Zeno had a baptistery and a hostel for pilgrims built, see Lippold 1972, 202. It is not accidental that the *Vita Danielis Stylitae* (ca. 500 A.D.: ed. Lietzmann-Hilgenfeld, Leipzig 1908) is the only source that praises Zeno’s *pietas* and his courage. Also the site of the burial place of St. Menas, who was venerated at Alexandria, was developed and raised to the status of a *polis*, see Lippold 1972, *loc.cit.*

<sup>25</sup> ὁ δὲ Ἰλλοῦς, τὴν τοῦ φρουρίου φυλακὴν ἐπιτρέψας Ἰνδακῶ Κοττούνη, τὸ λοιπὸν ἐσχόλαζεν ἐν ἀναγνώσει βιβλίων. See Elton 2000, 399; Feld 2005, 275.



grant of a chair of grammar at the imperial university, with the right of selecting his own pupils.

The bonds between Illos and Pampreprios became so close that when, in 478, Illos decided to leave Constantinople after two attempts on his life<sup>26</sup> (it was well known that they had been organised by the all-powerful Verina, the widow of Leo I, who embodied the dynastic legitimacy of Zeno's succession, in that she was the mother of his wife, the empress Ariadne), Pampreprios was banished from the capital on charges of practising pagan rites which involved black magic and of having forged oracles damaging to the emperor (Malch. fr. 23.14-8 B. 452: καὶ ἀπελθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰσαυρίαν, οἱ βασκαίνοντες αὐτῷ συνθέντες διαβολὴν τὴν τε ἐκ θρησκείας καὶ ὅτι μαγγανεύοι καὶ μαντεύοιτο τῷ Ἰλλου κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως, πείθουσι τὸν Ζήγωνα καὶ τὴν Βηρίαν τότε μέγιστα δυναμένην τῆς πόλεως ἐκπέμψαι<sup>27</sup>). After a brief stay in Pergamon, seat of the flourishing mystical-theurgic school founded by Edesios, the follower of Iamblichos<sup>28</sup>, we find Pampreprios once again in Illos' entourage, in Isauria, cf. Dam. fr. 291 Z.= 112 B A. μεταπεμψάμενοι ἐκ περιουσίας καὶ Παμπρέπριον. The earthquake of 25 September 478 marked an unexpected revival in Illos' fortunes: shrewdly taking advantage of the superstitious confusion at court (Zeno had fled to Chalcedon, and stepped up the pressure of the Goths under Theodoric Strabo and Theodoric the Amal) he returned to Constantinople, to Zeno's discomfiture, engineered the sending of Verina as a hostage, and advanced his protégé Pampreprios, who had now become his closest

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<sup>26</sup> The first, in the summer of 477, was carried out by a slave, Paulus (Joh. Ant. fr. 210 M. = 303.3 R. = 234 p. 426. 5-6 M.), the second, perpetrated in 478, by Verina's *domesticus* Epinikos (cf. Kand. fr. 1 B.), had the effect of causing Illos to leave for Isauria on the pretext of his brother's illness.

<sup>27</sup> In fact, Pampreprios could have been sentenced to death on the basis of the edict which threatened with the death penalty "sorcerers, magicians, and the others whom the people call malefactors because of their crimes" (*Cod. Theodos.* 1.9.16.4); this resulted, in the winter of 371/2, under Valens, in the beheading of the philosopher Maximos of Ephesus, a theurgist who had instructed Julian the Apostate, and author of the astrological poem *Περὶ καταρχῶν* cf. *Lith.* 71-4, with Livrea's observations, *Gnomon* 64 (1992) 205.

<sup>28</sup> Edesios' son, who died at the age of twenty, might actually have inspired Pampreprios to concern himself with oracles; cf. Eun. *VS* 23.5 Civiletti ἡ δὲ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον οικειότης οὕτως ἦν ἀπραγμάτευτος καὶ εὐκολος, ὥστε ἐξήρκει τὸν στέφανον ἐπιθεῖναι τῇ κεφαλῇ, καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀναβλέποντα χρησμούς ἐκφέρειν καὶ τούτους ἀψευδεῖς, καὶ πρὸς τὸ κάλλιστον εἶδος ἐνθέου πνεύματος γεγραμμένους.

adviser. At this juncture Pamprepios' fortunes underwent an unexpected surge: as *quaestor sacri palatii, consul* (perhaps *honorarius*), *patrician* he exercised a decisive role in advising Illos on how to repress the usurpation in 479 by Marcian<sup>29</sup>, who had in his favour the support of the common people of Constantinople and also the hopes of a dynastic legitimation, in that he was married to the second daughter of Leo and was the son of Anthemios, emperor of the West (467-72) and of the daughter of Marcian, emperor of the East in 450-57. Illos was forced to winter with Pamprepios at Nicaea, as we are told by Blockley's anonymous historian (perhaps the Isaurian Kandidos?), and *Suda* fr. 7 = Malchus fr. 23.14-8, p. 452, 482: καὶ τότε τοίνυν αὐτὸν λαβὼν ἐς Νίκαιαν ἦκε χειμάσων, εἴτε τὴν ἐκ τοῦ δήμου δυσχέρειαν ἐκκλίνων εἴτε ἐπὶ ταῖς σφαγαῖς τὸν ἔχοντα τὴν πόλιν ἐκτρέπεσθαι δαίμονα πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐθέλων. The unscrupulous misuse of oracular utterances, in the manipulation of which Pamprepios was very successful, was decisive in bringing about an unexpectedly favourable outcome for Zeno's cause. But when a third assassination attempt<sup>30</sup> finally persuaded Illos – who lost one of his ears in it – of the extreme precariousness of the Isaurian cause in the capital, he withdrew with Pamprepios, who had been driven out of Constantinople, and, after having been appointed *magister militum per Orientem*, fled to Antioch, which thus became the capital of the anti-Zenonian forces<sup>31</sup>. Here he was backed by the bishop Kalandion. There seems to be no good reason for rejecting the explicit statements of the sources, that Pamprepios, who like Marsus and Leontios followed his protector, lost no time in taking up the role of Illos' personal adviser, as the *éminence grise* of his political programme, a decisive position from which to direct the course of events in accordance with a master plan which now had a universal dimension, of bringing about the overthrow of Zeno as a first step to restoring Julianic paganism<sup>32</sup>. Hence, Pamprepios undertook a series of missions to coordinate

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<sup>29</sup> See *PLRE* 2, 827.

<sup>30</sup> This was carried out in 481 by Urbicius, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, at the behest of the Empress Ariadne, who was demanding the release of her mother Verina, whom Illos was holding prisoner. On the background to this attempt, see Lippold 1972, 179.

<sup>31</sup> See Euagr. *HE* 3. 16, Joh. Ant. fr. 211.1 M. = 303. 10 R. = 234 p. 426. 12 M.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, we learn from Zacharias Scholastikos that at Gaza it was feared that a victory over Zeno would bring in its wake the re-opening of the pagan temples (*Vit. Is. Mon.* CSCO 103, Scr.Syri III, 5. 25.7) and that in Caria numerous oracles were forecasting the collapse of Christianity (*Vit. Sev.* 2.40 Kugener). How much Pamprepios influenced them we cannot say.

the strands of opposition. His first stop was Egypt, where his enduring personal links with the savants of Alexandria and the singular religious situation in the country seemed to guarantee success, despite the malicious comment of Damaskios, fr. 58 B A.: ὅτι Πανικόν τι ζῶον διακομιζόμενον θεάσασθαί φησι ὁ Ἰέραξ ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς, ὁ συνακμάσας Ἀμμωνίῳ ἐξ Αἰθιοπίας εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον, εἰκόδς ἀκριβῶς τοῖς γραφομένοις καὶ τυπομένοις ἀκηκοέναι τε αὐτοῦ τῆς φωνῆς διὰ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας φερομένου οἴονεὶ τριζούσης. Pamprepios' arrival in Alexandria occurred during the very days that Isidore was attending his friend Sarapion on his death bed<sup>33</sup>. The city was convulsed by religious strife. In the controversy between the monophysite patriarch Peter Mongos<sup>34</sup>, who had the support of Zeno and perhaps of the ambiguous “edict of unity”, the *Henoticon* of 28 July 482, and John Talaia, a Chalcedonian protégé of Illos<sup>35</sup>, Pamprepios attempted to bring about an unnatural rapprochement (though this is contested by some scholars, who see here a pure power-struggle without any religious pretexts<sup>36</sup>) between the Chalcedonian Dyophysite groups and pagan culture, which still flourished in Alexandria; but it is not possible to claim that this mission of 482-3<sup>37</sup> was crowned by any degree of success. Pamprepios' fortunes were very short-lived, cf.

<sup>33</sup> See Di Branco 2006, 163 and n. 322-4.

<sup>34</sup> See the devastatingly negative verdict of Dam. fr. 236 Z. = 113 A. : ὁ δὲ τῶν κρατούντων τῆς πολιτείας ἡγεμῶν τὴν δόξαν ἐπισκοπεῖν εἰληχῶς, ὄνομα Πέτρος, ἀνήρ ἰταμὸς ὦν καὶ περιπόνηρος, adding E 178 = 118 A A. πονηρὸν δὲ ἀνθρώπον καὶ τὸν βίον ἐπίρρητον, and see Asmus 1909, 469-70; Stein 1949, 2,35; Haeling 1980, 94 and n.91. The extremist front represented by Mongos, the rhetor Aphthonios, and the fanatically monophysite monks of Enaton committed the crime of destroying a revered statue of Isis at Menouthis-Aboukir; this had been particularly dear to Horapollon and his school, in particular to Asklepiodotos. A convoy of no fewer than twenty camels, loaded with devotional objects venerated by pagans was dispatched to Alexandria; the treasures all ended up on an immense bonfire, see Athanassiadi 1999, 28-9.

<sup>35</sup> Talaia had in fact pledged himself not to aspire to the episcopate, but at the beginning of 482 he broke his oath by sending an ambassador to Illos (whom he had already met, acting as an envoy of Timotheos Ailouros, the patriarch of Alexandria, in 478 at Constantinople). Illos promised him money for bribery: cf. Zach.Schol.HE 5.6-7, Euagr. HE 3.12. On the vicissitudes of the Alexandrian Theognostos, who accepted the bribes, see Asmus 1913, 322ff.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Chuvin 1991, 100-2; Salamon 1996, 192-5; Feld 2005, 178; *contra* see Jarry 1968, 153. 2 A A.

<sup>37</sup> His arrival in Egypt is to be placed in the spring of 482 according to Rhet. 222. 13, Dam. E 172, fr. 287 Z. = 112 A A.

Rhet. 224.15: ἦν δὲ καὶ ἡ ἑβδομαΐα πρὸς Ἄφροδίτην φερομένη, and his relations with the intelligentsia are marked by the diffident ridicule revealed by the anecdote on the ‘Cynic’ Salloustios in Dam. fr. 148 Z.= 66 A A. τῷ δὲ Παμπρεπίῳ μέγιστον ἤδη δυναμένῳ ἐντυχῶν, ἐπειδὴ ἐκεῖνος ὠραϊζόμενος, τί θεοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους; ἔφη, τίς δέ, ἔφη, οὐκ οἶδεν ὡς οὐτ’ ἐγὼ πώποτε θεὸς ἐγενόμην οὔτε σὺ ἀνθρώπος; Quite the contrary: Pamprepios’ mission proved to be counter-productive, since he was not only forced to accept Mongos’ installation on the patriarchal throne, soon endorsed by ranging himself with the astute but inconclusive *Henoticon*, but he also brought down upon the learned pagans the violent persecutions of the stupid and fanatical monophysites, as we see in the case of Heraiskos and his nephew Horapollo<sup>38</sup>. This violent débacle explains the hostility towards Pamprepios that is found even in the Neoplatonist sources, which stigmatise him as a “demonic disaster” (πανικὸν δυτύχημα) and, worse still, as τυφώνιος, καὶ Τυφῶνος ἔτι πολυπλοκώτερον θηρίον (Dam. fr. 287 Z. = 112 A A.), recalling the πνεύματα Τυφώνεια that were unleashed against Proklos<sup>39</sup>. But if even to the ultra-hostile Damaskios the whole Egyptian episode seems obscure (Dam. E 111 = 78 D A. οὐκ εἰμὶ πρόθυμος πρᾶγμα λέγειν καὶ ἄδηλον εἰς ἀλήθειαν καὶ πρόχειρον εἰς φιλαπεχθημοσύνην), this could imply a split in the Neoplatonic groups in Egypt between factions favourable and unfavourable to

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<sup>38</sup> They were ill-treated and tortured, see the sources collected by Feld 2002, 277 and n.55, esp. Dam. fr. 314-5 Z. = 117 B-C A A.: καὶ τὸν Ὠραπόλλωνα καὶ τὸν Ἡραΐσκον αἰροῦσι καὶ νεύροις ἀνακρεμάσαντες ἀπὸ τῆς χειρὸς ἐκότερον ἀπῆτουν τὸν Ἀρποκρᾶν καὶ Ἰσίδωρον, καὶ κατατεινομένῳ ταῖς στρέβλαις ὑπὲρ τοῦ κατειπεῖν τοὺς συνεγνωκότας· οἱ δὲ ἐμπρίσαντες τοὺς ὀδόντας τοῦ εἶξαι τῷ τυράννῳ γεγόνασι κρείττους. There were repercussions at Athens too: Proklos was forced into exile, and the time-honoured Asklepieion was destroyed: see Di Branco 2006, 191.

<sup>39</sup> See Plat. *Phaedr.* 230a Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον with the commentary of Herm. 31.66 Couvreur τὸ δὲ Τυφῶνος ὅτι ὁ θεὸς οὗτος ἐπάσχει τοῦ πλημμελοῦς καὶ ἀτάκτου. On ‘Typhon’ as ‘mal absolu et multiforme’ (the definition of Lamoureux-Aujoulat 2008, 29ff., 60ff., on the insoluble problem of the identification of Typhon, the co-protagonist of *Aegyptii sive de providentia*) Baudy 1992, 47-82 has assembled a very rich doxography; to it we may add *C.Herm.* 4.77; Athanassiadi 1999, 19 and 77 n.7 (“an allegory of Christian misrule”); Shorrock 2001, 121-5 and n.200; Hagl 1997, 127 and *passim*; to the useful note of Schlange-Schöningh 1995, 277-8 n.68, add Vian, 1963, 17-37. The Chorician cave in Cilicia was considered as Typhon’s residence, see the passages assembled by Merkelbach-Stauber 4, 19/08/01, p. 195-8.

Pamphrepios before the agitator returned, vanquished, to Antioch. While Pamphrepios was attempting to form anti-Zenonian alliances with Odoacer, with the Persians, with the Armenians<sup>40</sup>, Illos abandoned all prevarication in 484 and decided to come out in open opposition to Zeno. Since he could not afford, as a barbarian of Isaurian origin, the hostility with which both the people and aristocratic circles had branded his compatriot Zeno, he recruited the support of the canny Verina and contrived that she should nominate as emperor the senator Leontios, a pious aristocrat who was *persona grata* to Christians and nobles<sup>41</sup>. In Antioch in 484, which from this point became the pretender's capital, Pamphrepios was nominated as *magister officiorum*<sup>42</sup>, but scarcely after two months the situation came to a head with the victory of Zeno's army which compelled Verina, Illos, Marsus and Pamphrepios to withdraw into the impregnable fortress of Papirios<sup>43</sup>, hotly pursued by Zeno's forces under the command of John of Scythia, the new *magister militum per Orientem*, cf. Theoph. 5977 = p.131.6-9 De Boor μετὰ Ἰωάννην τοῦ Σκύθου κατὰ τὸν Ἰλλοὺν ἐπεμψεν (sc. Theodericum Amalun) ὃς καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἀποκλεισθῆναι Ἰλλοὺν καὶ Λεόντιον εἰς τὸ Παπύρου καστέλλιν καταλιπὼν Ἰωάννην πολιορκοῦντα αὐτὸς πρὸς Ζήνωνα ἤλθεν. In the castle, destined to fall only after four years of determined resistance, the tragedy was played out: Verina died, overcome by the hardships of the siege; and Pamphrepios was put to death by the very men who had shared his desperate gamble. Malalas and Rhetorios openly accused him of treason; Damaskios and Joshua the Stylite made the specific charge that Pamphrepios' loyalty to Illos had come under suspicion after Trokundos, Illos' brother, had failed to return<sup>44</sup>. Besides this, these suspicions of the Egyptian's untrustworthiness had already been expressed in connection with his mission to his native land by Dam. E 172-3 Z.= 113 O-P A. ὁ δὲ Παμφρέπιος κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον παραγεγονῶς Ἰσιδώρω παρέσχεν ἐκ τῶν λόγων αἰσθησιν

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Joh.Ant. 214.2 M. = 306.7-9 R. = 237 p. 434. 13-4 M., Jos.Styl. 15, Proc. *De aed.* 3.1.25, and see McCormick 1977, esp. 215. On Persian weakness during the reign of Zeno, see Lippold, 199. Popes Simplicius and Felix always respected the authority of Zeno as the one and only emperor, and not even Odoacer dared to rebel against it.

<sup>41</sup> Joh. Ant. 214.2 *cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Mal. 15; Theoph. 5976.

<sup>43</sup> Jos. Styl. 17, Joh. Ant. fr. 214.3 M. = 306.33 R. = 237 p. 436 18-9 M., Mal. 15, p. 389, Joh. Nik. 88. 878, Theoph. 5976-7, *Patria Const.* 2. 227 Preger.

<sup>44</sup> Mal. 15, p. 389; Rhet. 221, 223, 224 (esp. *οἱε'* Περὶ τοῦ εἶναι αὐτὸν προδότην); Dam. E 291= fr. 306 Z. = 115 C A.; Jos. Styl.11.

ὥς οὐχ ὑγιαίνοι πρὸς Ἴλλου, ἀλλ' ἤδη προδοσεῖοντι ἔοικε καὶ μέντοι καὶ περιορωμένῳ τὴν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείαν<sup>45</sup>. At Papirios the more likely cause seems to have been a flare-up of anger among the besieged, demoralised by claustrophobia and wearied by the unfulfilled oracles and prophecies put out by Pamprepios, who was given to fanning vain hopes (even in 484 the Persian king Peroz was killed in warfare against the Eptalites). The beheading and the ill-treatment of his corpse give us a glimpse (how superficial it is, we cannot tell) of a trial, set in motion by Illos<sup>46</sup>, which anticipates the appalling fate which befell Illos himself and Leontios in 488<sup>47</sup>. If he had survived, we would have gladly attributed to Pamprepios these words of a veteran (later converted) of the anti-Christian strife, *Zach. Vit. Sev.* p. 40 Kugener:

“Recall how many sacrifices we offered in Caria, when we were still pagans, to the pagan gods, when we besought those supposed gods (dissecting and scrutinising the livers in accordance with our magic art), to vouchsafe to us whether we, along with Leontios, Illos, Pamprepios, and all those who had rebelled with them, had defeated the emperor Zeno.

“Well, we received a vast number of oracles and at the same time assurances, like the one that the emperor could not possibly withstand the force of their onslaught, and that the time had come in which Christianity would break up and disappear, and in which pagan worship would be once more raised up. For all that, events showed that these oracles were deceitful, as had happened with the ones Apollo delivered to Croesus of Lydia or Pyrrhus of Epirus.”

Be that as it may, if the hostility of the pagan sources can be explained away by the damage caused to Egyptian Neoplatonism by Pamprepios' political machinations (e.g. the sharp verdict of *Dam. fr.* 282 = 115 B A.: νῦν δὲ καὶ τῷ μὴ πάνυ γελασεῖοντι γέλωτα παρῄξει ἢ τοῦ ἔργου ἕξοδος), while the aversion of Christian writers of every persuasion is more than justified by our subject's obstinate adherence to paganism, we should nevertheless hesitate to attribute to Pamprepios a soul as black as

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<sup>45</sup> “Fortasse talibus verbis Heraiscus praedixerat Pamprepium proditorem fore” Zintzen 1967, *ad loc.*, p. 238; but see Asmus 1909, 468; Asmus 1913, 338ff. I do not think it is possible that Pamprepios could have conceived of a rapprochement with Zeno, and Feld 2002, 267-8 shares my doubts. However, for negotiations between Illos and the besieger John of Scythia see *Joh. Ant. fr.* 214 M. = 306. 61-5 R. = 237 p. 428. 23 M., and Lippold 1972, 190.

<sup>46</sup> See Schlange-Schöningen 1995, 153-4.

<sup>47</sup> For the details, see Lippold 1972, 190-91.

his skin<sup>48</sup>. While we must resist the temptation to make him either into a kind of martyr of the dying pagan creed, alongside Asmus, or, on the contrary, an adventurer, a Byzantine Wallenstein, with Grégoire, we are neither convinced that the whole truth is represented by the recent “whitewashing” of Schlange-Schöningen, who sees him as fatally attached to Illos’ bandwagon<sup>49</sup>. Due emphasis must be given to the energetic and unshakable consistency with which Pamprepios promoted right to the very end, with all the means at his disposal – including the utterly unprincipled – the undoubtedly desperate cause of a restoration of paganism, such as Julian had sought to bring about; and the fierce pride of the intellectual, both the man of letters and the philosopher, eclipses all the less positive aspects of his personality, and commands the respect of the historians of his own day. For even a prejudiced and unsympathetic source like Damaskios, though he brands him as ἀγύρτης τῷ ὄντι καὶ φιλομαντευτής, is forced to acknowledge the charm of his personality, if it is to him that fr. 93 a Z. = 113 A. refers to: ὁ δὲ διηγεῖτο μυρία δ’ ὅσα δ’ ὄν ἐκῆλει τοὺς ἀκούοντας οὐδὲν ἔλαττον, εἰ μὴ καὶ πλέον ἢ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ὀμήρου τοὺς Φαίακας. ὁ μὲν γε Ἀλκινόου ἀπόλογος τερατολογίας μεστός, ἐν μὲν ὑπονοίαις ἀληθευούσης, ἐν δὲ τῷ φανερωῷ διαβεβλημένης εἰς τὸ ψευδέστερον. In addition to this, the perceptiveness and understanding of Damaskios’ verdict in fr. 291 Z. = 112 B A. outweighs any bias: ἀρχὴ ἐτέρων πραγμάτων διαδέχεται μεγίστων καὶ κακίστων, ἵνα μάθωμεν τὰς τῆς τύχης μεταβολῆς ἐλεγχούσας ἐκάστοτε τῶν τυχῶν τὰς παντοίας προαιρέσεις οὐδὲ μιᾶς ἦττον μέθης συμποτικῆς. This interpretation of Pamprepios as the tool of fickle Τύχη, albeit driven by an inexhaustible intoxication of the spirit, seems to us the nearest approach to historical reality and psychological plausibility. “To go away, and seek a place elsewhere in which to lay new foundations for politics and philosophy, as Plato had done centuries before”<sup>50</sup>: ultimately, Isidore and Damaskios will put into practice this radical break with the tottering structures, cultural and political, of their own day, a break already anticipated by Pamprepios, the enemy they loathed.

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<sup>48</sup> μέλας τὴν χροιάν, εἰδεχθὲς τὴν ὄψιν is the appalling portrait by Dam. fr. 178 Z. = 77 D A.

<sup>49</sup> See Schlange-Schöningen 1995, 151: “In der Verbindung des Grammatikers Pamprepios mit dem *magister militum* Illos hat das Heidentum zum letzten Mal eine für den christlichen Staat gefährlich politische Bedeutung erlangt”.

<sup>50</sup> The splendid expression is Di Branco’s 2006, 179.

Unfortunately, recent historical writing, though it has, admittedly after considerable oscillations, arrived at a reasonable consensus in reconstructing the biographical events of Pamprepios' life, has inexplicably failed to come to terms with the most important item in the dossier. This is literary in nature, namely *P.Gr. Vindob. 29788 A-C*, published by Gerstinger in 1928. From this codex, written at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, have survived, apart from a loose sheet which is impossible to place with any certainty (fr. 1), the entire final 'binio' containing the end of a historical epic poem, which is almost illegible (fr. 2), an epyllion of about 200 hexameters, whose title, Ὠραι καὶ πράγματα<sup>51</sup>, is deduced from the iambic prologue (fr. 3), and an encomium *Εἰς τὸν πατρικ[ιον] Θεαγένη ἰχθ[ρ]* (fr. 4). Admittedly, it is possible to argue that this aristocrat, of pagan background, being wealthy and generous, and one of the last of the eponymous archons, and exceedingly proud of his own Attic origin, could have been eulogised by any one of the large number of Egyptian intellectuals whom we know to have flocked to his court in Athens<sup>52</sup>; this would weaken the case for identifying him with Pamprepios, who is however the only one of them whose close connexion with Theagenes is abundantly attested by the sources. The correctness of Gerstinger's attribution is not lessened by the fact (erroneously stressed by Feld) that the Theagenes lauded in the encomium as an out-and-out pagan could not be identified with Pamprepios' patron because "the latter had long ago been converted to Christianity"<sup>53</sup>: on the contrary, careful reading of Dam. fr. 258 Z. = 105 A. gives one a glimpse of a conversion experience that was both anguished and belated: ὦν δὲ θυμοειδῆς καὶ οὐδαμοῦ καταφρονεῖσθαι ἀνεχόμενος, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι σπουδάζων ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ οὐχ ἥμισυ τῶν φιλοσοφούντων, ὑπερορῶν δὲ καὶ

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<sup>51</sup> A clear allusion to Hesiod's Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι. The Hesiodic elements (which, to be honest, are fairly indirect) of Pamprepios' epyllion have been studied by Rebuffat 1992, 113-22. Proklos' keen interest in Hesiod is well known: see C. Faraggiana di Sarzana 1987, 21-41.

<sup>52</sup> This is the objection raised by Graindor 1929, 469-70; Körte 1932, 27; Keydell 1931, 123; Schissel 1929, 1079. I prefer to align myself with Maas 1929, 251, who sees "keinen ernsthaften Grund zu widersprechen". If the author had been Christodoros of Koptos in the time of Anastasios, as Viljamaa 1968, 54-8 would have it, we would not know with whom this Theagenes should be identified. Cameron 1976, 236-7 suggests Kollouthos as the author of fr. 1-2, quite implausibly.

<sup>53</sup> Feld 2002, 275, following Schlänge 1995, 151 and n.35. For Theagenes as a pagan see Miguélez Caveró 2008, 84 n. 268.



διαπτύων τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ἐν δυνάμει δοκοῦντας εἶναι καὶ προθυμομένους ἐν τῇ Ῥωμαίων πολιτείᾳ λαμπρύνεσθαι, καὶ τὰ νέα ἄξιώματα προτιμῶν τῶν ἀρχαίων ἠθῶν τῆς εὐσεβείας ἔλαθεν ἑαυτὸν ἐμπεσὼν εἰς τὸν τῶν πολλῶν βίον ἀποσπασθεὶς τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ τῶν ἐτι ἄνω προγόνων· ἔλαθε δὲ τοὺς πέλας οὐκ ἐτι φίλους ἀληθινούς, ἀλλὰ κόλακας ἀπατηλοὺς κεκτημένους. οὐκ οὖν ἐτι διέσωζε τὴν πάλαι αἰδῶ πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν, ἀλλὰ τῷ μὲν λόγῳ τοὺς φιλοσόφους ἐπεποίητο περὶ ἑαυτὸν, τῷ δὲ ἔργῳ τοὺς θεραπεύοντας. However, Theagenes did come from a devoutly pagan family, as is proved by Dam. fr. 273 Z. = 105 A. A. which attests of his personality ἐτι παιδίον ὄντα, in an Athens devastated by the sack of Attila (447) or that of the Vandals (467), λυπούμενον ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀλωλόσι καὶ πεποροθημένοις, a cutting riposte from his grandfather Archiadidas, who was a passionate adherent of paganism, ὃ Θεάγηνες, ἔφη, θαρροεῖν ἤδη σε χρὴ καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς ὁμολογεῖν σωτηρίους χάριτας ὑπὲρ τῶν σωμάτων, ὑπὲρ δὲ τῶν χρημάτων οὐκ ἀθυμητέον. This Archiadidas moreover was none other than the grandson of Plutarch and the friend of Proklos, cf. Mar. *VP* 14, 17; his daughter Asklepigenia the younger, after being healed of an incurable illness thanks to a “miracle” worked by Proklos (*VP* 29), went on to marry Theagenes. It follows therefore that Pamprepios’ encomium is to be dated *before* his conversion to Christianity; indeed he actually seems to seek to discourage it with the fine line 4: ὕβρει γηράσκων Ἐλικῶν ἀπεθήκατο Μούσας (cf. e.g. Aen. Gaz. p.3.7 Colonna φιλοσοφία δὲ καὶ τὰ μουσεῖα εἰς δεινὴν ἐρημίαν ἀφῖκται), and with the *Encomium to Athens* pre-announced in lines 19-24:

εὐεπίης μὲν  
 χεῦματα φωνήεντα τεὰ νικῶσιν Ἀθῆναι.  
 ἔνθα γὰρ αἰγλήεις ἀνεθήκατο μάντις Ἀπόλλων  
 καὶ κιθάρην καὶ τόξα καὶ ἔρνεα θέσκελα δάφνης.  
 ἀλλὰ οἱ εὐρύτερον τι μέλος μετὰ τοῦτο φυλάσσω  
 σὸν πόθον εὐκελάδοιο φέρον ἠγήτορα μολπῆς.

The fact that the copyist breaks off after line 57 points not so much to the defective state of his copy-text as the slightness of the interest that would be felt in sixth-century Egypt in the encomium of someone who, as well as turning out pagan, was, outside Athens, a complete nobody<sup>54</sup>; it

<sup>54</sup> Admittedly Damaskios (fr. 261 Z. = 100 A. A.) describes him as πρωτεύων ἀνήρ ἐν τῇ πόλει, τάχα δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ῥωμαίων πολιτείᾳ συμπάση. καὶ γὰρ ἦν

must be significant that the scribe hastens, out of *horror vacui*, to fill up the page by copying out two of the letters of Gregory of Nazianzos! The attribution of fr. 4 to Pampreprios entails that of fr. 3, for all its differences of literary genre and intrinsic quality: it is true that before the *titulus* of fr. 4 there is not sufficient space to read Παμπροπρίο]υ, which tells in favour of a different author, and even τοῦ αὐτο]ῦ appears to be ruled out by the traces, which are more easily explained as an ornamental stroke forming a frame for the title.

At the end of fr. 3 the poet takes his leave of his audience in a kind of *propemptikon*, which can be construed as referring to an imminent journey to Egypt (193-8):

ἀλλά μοι εὐμένεοιτε καὶ ἐξ ελ[  
πέμπετέ με σπείσαντες ἐφισταμεγ[  
Κυρήνη καλέει με, βιᾶζόμεγος. δ[έ με Φοῖβος 195  
ἔλκει θηροφόνοιο φίλης ἐπὶ γούνατα [νύμφης.  
δ[εῦτε], φίλοι, πρὸς ἔδεθλον ἀρειμανέος Π[ερ]ολ[ε]μαίου  
ἔ[ν]θα με κ[ι]κλήσκουσι Λιβυστίδες εἰσέτι Μ[ο]ῦσαι. (193-8)

193 Ἔλ[ληνος ἀρούρης Gerstinger || 194 ἐφιστάμεγ[ον νέφ ἔργω Gerstinger : fr. ἐπιστάμεγ[Livrea, qui tamen ἐφισταμέν[ησι πορείαις vel λοχείαις praetulerit || 195 κυρήνη Π, corr. Gerstinger | δέ με Φοῖβος dub. Maas : κ[αὶ Ἄπόλλων Armim 196 [νύμ]φης Gerstinger || 197 δ[ε]ῦτε] ... Π[ερ]ολ[ε]μαίου Gerstinger || 198 ἔ[ν]θα . . . [κικλή]σ[κουσι] . . . [Μο]ῦσαι Gerstinger || post h. v. carminis exitus ornamento indicatur

If ‘Cyrene’ stands, by metonymy, for ‘Africa’, there is, unmistakably, a complimentary allusion to his favourite Callimachus by the poet, who may have been recalling his own fierce literary dispute with his friend Severianos of Damascus<sup>55</sup>, who was a fellow-student of Proklos, and famed for having declined the post of praetorian prefect offered to him by Zeno on condition that he converted to Christianity; see the important evidence of Dam. fr. 282 Z. = 108 A. τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν ἀπεδέχετο μετρίως, τὸν δὲ Καλλίμαχον εἰς χεῖρας λαβῶν, οὐκ ἔστιν

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τῶν Ῥωμαίων πατέρων εἶς καὶ πρῶτος τῆς περὶ τὰ βασίλεια συγκλήτου βουλῆς τῇ τε ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὐγενείᾳ καὶ τῇ μεγαλειότητι τῶν τρόπων καὶ τῇ περὶ τοὺς λόγους διαφανεῖ σπουδῇ τε καὶ ἐπιμελείᾳ, but *PLRE* 2, 1063 observes that “the word is used in more general sense of his pre-eminence”, see also Castrén 1994, 13. In fact, Pampreprios would not have sought refuge in Constantinople if Theagenes had exercised any influence whatever there.

<sup>55</sup> On this very interesting figure, an enthusiastic pagan, remote from power, and a lover of classical culture, see Asmus 1909, 467; Asmus 1910, 277; Chuvin 1991, 99.

ὄτε οὐ κατέσκαπτε τὸν Λίβυν ποιητὴν· ἀνιόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ μᾶλλον πολλαχοῦ καὶ τῷ βιβλίῳ προσέπτυε. The mention of “warlike Ptolemy” establishes as certain that the poet is about to leave for Egypt, on a mission which was not without danger. This situation fits perfectly with Pampreprios’ arrival in Egypt μετὰ πολλῆς δορυφορίας καὶ τύφου<sup>56</sup> in the spring of 482, or even in the autumn of 481 when the patriarch John Salophakialos was still alive. There is perhaps an echo of the contemporary religious conflicts at Alexandria in the apposite adjective ἄρειμανής: in fact John Talaia, who already in 478 had approached close to Illos in his mission to Constantinople on the orders of the then patriarch Timotheos Ailouros, was replaced by an imperial prefect with Peter Mongos, who was inclined to accept the ambiguous compromise devised by the emperor Zeno, on the advice of Acacius, to bring about unity, and published as *Henoticon* on 28 July 482<sup>57</sup>. Already on 15 July 482 the Roman pope Simplicius had sent a letter to Zeno in which he requested a reconsideration of the illegal dismissal of Talaia<sup>58</sup>; his successor Felix III openly condemned the author of the compromise, thus giving rise to the Akakian schism which lasted from 484 to 519<sup>59</sup>. In this situation, Pampreprios could count not only upon the support from his ties with the pagan intelligentsia in Alexandria, but also upon the fact that he came from Panopolis, the centre of Nestorius’ dyophysite movement<sup>60</sup> (Nestorius could also find it possible to make common cause with the Chalcedonians whom Illos was protecting). But the cause of Pampreprios was by now lost, and dragged to ruin with him what remained of Egyptian paganism, which had to endure the sending of Nicomedes, a henchman of Zeno, with orders to repress opposition: ὁ δὲ ἀποσταλεὶς βασιλικῶς Ἀγάπιον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους φιλοσόφους κατασχὼν εἰς τὸ ἀρχεῖον

<sup>56</sup> On τύφος and Pampreprios’ affinity with it, see n. 39 above.

<sup>57</sup> On this ambiguous edict see Grillmeier 1986, 285, and Feld 2005, 273. The Greek text is in Schwartz 1927, 52-4. The reference to the three preceding ecumenical councils obviated mentioning the question of the nature or natures of Christ (one? two? and how related?)

<sup>58</sup> He took refuge in the autumn of 482 first with Illos in Antioch (*Lib. Brev.* 18), then in Rome with Pope Simplicius (Euagr. *HE* 3.15). Simplicius had, even before the issuing of the *Henoticon*, addressed a letter to Zeno (*Ep.* 17, *PL* 58.55ff.) pleading with him to re-examine the circumstances of the unjust removal of Talaia, without however declaring himself in favour of Mongos.

<sup>59</sup> On which see E. Schwartz, *Publ. Sammlungen zum acacianischen Schisma*, *Abhandlungen der Akademie*, München 1934.

<sup>60</sup> Nestorius was exiled and died in the Panopolites, see Salamon 1996, 166.

ἀπήγαγε (Dam. fr. 328 Z. = 126 C A.) But what was Pamprepios' point of departure for his journey to Egypt? Certainly not Athens, as Gerstinger's daring conjecture in line 193 would have us believe: this does not square with the known facts of Pamprepios' life, and leaves Antioch as the only real possibility, the capital where Illos resided thereafter. But in the background there looms the lost home, ever hankered after, the centre of power at Constantinople. This seems to be borne out by the prologue of this poem, where, after denying, in a sort of *Priamel*, any wish to compose auletic poetry (3.7) or lyric song (3.8), oracular or prophetic utterance (if this is what is meant by the swan-song of 3.9-11<sup>61</sup>), it homes in on a strange geographical choice of subject (3.13-5):

ἀλλ' ὄσον [ἐκ Θ]ρήκης νιφετώδεος ἔμπνοος αὔρη  
 χειμερίοις πελάγεσσιν ἐπισκαίρουσα θαλάσσης  
 ὄρθριον αἰίδει ῥοθίων μέλος.

The cold winter of Byzantium is in fact generated by the ice of neighbouring Thrace<sup>62</sup>, to which were attributed *en bloc* all the rigours of the cold season even in continental Greece, especially in Attica. It will be no accident if Pamprepios draws on his memories of youth to depict the storm with ornamentation that is unashamedly Callimachean (the famous storm in Callimachus' *Hecale*<sup>63</sup>; the rare adjective Λιβυστίς will be a borrowing from Callimachus [cf. fr. 676 Pf.] rather than from Nonnos), or if his antiquarian taste, a typically Neoplatonic trait, impels him to fill the whole of his *ekphrasis* with references to Attic cults, rites, and myths.

Unfortunately, serious damage has been suffered by the θαλύσιος ὕμνος intoned at 3.150-8 perhaps by a priest, perhaps by the same ploughman:

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<sup>61</sup> For an instance of the dependence of this *Priamel* on the early poet Terpander, see Livrea 1993, 3-6.

<sup>62</sup> In fact, Zeno had been *magister militum* in Thrace from 467 to 469, see Lippold 1972, 155; Elton 2000, 396-7, but this may be no more relevant than the sending of Illos to Thrace against Theodoric Strabo in 474. It does seem quite possible that the cold winds of Thrace symbolise rather the barbarian armies of the two Theodorics: there is an exact analogy in Callimachus' portrayal of the Celts in *H.Del.* 174-6: ὀψίγονοι Τιτῆνες, ἀφ' ἐσπέρου ἐσχατόωντος / ῥάσωνται νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότες ἢ ἰσάριθμοι / τείρεσιν ἠνίκα πλεῖστα κατ' ἠέρα βουκολέονται. See also the passages of Nonnos adduced by Gigli Piccardi 1985, 129-31 on the metaphor "The storm of war."

<sup>63</sup> See Livrea 1992, 147-51.

. . . . . ]πων ιερὸν γένος· ὡς γὰρ οἴω  
 . . . . . ]υκε, ταχ' ἂν μακάρεσσιν ἐρίζοι·  
 . . . . . ]. ἦσαιτο, τίς ἂν στάχυν ἀγνὸν ἀέξει  
 . . . . . ]. μεγάλησιν ἐπ' ἐλίσις ἴλαος εἶης  
 . . . . . πο]λύολβε, σὺ δ' οὐ μάθεσ ὄργια θεινά  
 . . . . . δεδάηκε . . . . [ . . . . . ]εῖψαι  
 . . . . . ]βασίλεια πολύλλιτε, νεῦσον ἰδέσθαι  
 . . . . . ]ροισιν ἐμοῖ [. . . . . ρς κεν ἀέξοις  
 εἰσιδ[έειν . . . ]πα καὶ ὄριον ἔργον ἀμάλλης.

150 ἐν]πων Livrea : Μερό]πων Gerstinger | ιερων Π, corr. Maas : ιερῶν Gerstinger ||  
 151 ὃς φίλος ὑμῖ πε]φυκε Arnim | εριζει Π, corr. Arnim || 152 ὃς δ' ἐπιμωμ]ήσαιτο  
 Arnim || 153 εφ' Π, corr. nescio quis || 154 Δήμητεο πολ]ύολβε Arnim | ὄργια θεινά  
 Keydell : ὄργ[ια Κ]ῶα Gerstinger || 155 δεδάηκε nescio quis : δεδαήκει ε . . . Horna |  
 ἀμ]εῖψαι Arnim || 156 πολυλλιτε Π, corr. Arnim || 157 ]ροισι νεμοντ[ Gerstinger :  
 ]ροισιν ἐμὸν Bernardini Marzolla | -ς [ῶ]ς κεν Keydell || 158 εἰσιδ[έειν ἀμητ]ά Keydell  
 | [ἔρ]γον Gerstinger ||

The epithet Θαλυστιάς is applied to Demeter in Nonnos (*D.* 19.88, 40.347, cf. 11.501), as already in Theocr. *Id.* 7.3, 31, but it can refer to any kind of harvest festival, as to the grape harvest in Hom. *I* 534; also in Nonn. *D.* 12.103 θαλυστιάς... κούρη designates the Nymph of Autumn. Here, in the context of agricultural rites of the Eleusinian kind, the phrase μεγάλαι ἐλίδες alludes to soteriological rituals, and this matches the predilections of the historical Pamprepios, as we shall see more clearly below. One might guess that the expression was frequently on the lips of the Egyptian during the performance of his mantic and theurgic functions. Nor should any surprise be felt at the interest in the Eleusinian rituals shown by this Neoplatonic philosopher, who was always ready to make propaganda for the mysteries and their traditional paraphernalia. Thus, it is not fortuitous that Zosimos (4.18) mentions a hierophant in the Eleusinian rites named Nestorios, who is usually identified with the father or grandfather of the Neoplatonist Plutarch, who renovated the Academy at Athens; he died in 471/2; his daughter Asklepigeneia instructed Proklos in the mysteries of the school's theurgic rites; she had become the depositary of the most diverse pagan cults, in a kind of bloodless syncretism. The other Asklepigeneia, the granddaughter and namesake of the first, ended up, as luck would have it, as the wife of Theagenes! At the very close of the fifth century, we cannot feel doubts about the connection of a late survival of the Eleusinian cults with one Proklos, certainly the pupil of his much more famous namesake, on whom precious information is preserved by the *Suda*, π 2472 = 4.210. 1-4 Adler: ὁ Προκλήτιος χρηματίσας Θεμεσίωνος, Λαοδικείας τῆς Συρίας, ἱεροφάντης, ἔγραψε

Θεολογίαν, Εἰς τὸν παρ' Ἡσιόδῳ τῆς Πανδώρας μῦθον, εἰς τὰ Χρυσὰ Ἔπη... καὶ ἄλλα τινά. And a Nikagoras, archon in 485/6, could have been the descendant of the Nikagoras the Eleusinian priest who was sent to Egypt by Constantine<sup>64</sup>. More generally, it is known that Asklepiodotus the elder of Alexandria, master of his future successor Isidore, while he was living at Aphrodisias in Caria carried out an energetic building programme in the interests of paganism, restoring temples and cults, and beautifying the city: but his aversion πρὸς τὴν ὀρφικὴν καὶ χαλδαϊκὴν τὴν ὑψηλοτέραν σοφίαν, καὶ τὸν κοινὸν φιλοσοφίας νοῦν ὑπεραίρουσαν<sup>65</sup>, made him in some respects the very antithesis of his fellow-pupil Pamprepios.

Also, after having attributed the pagan agricultural cults represented in fr. 3 to a feast similar to the *Proerosia* or the *Thesmophoria*, which both took place in autumn, it is worth our while to revisit the question of the season depicted in the *ekphrasis* of Pamprepios, which comes into the category of συνεξευγμένα... αἱ πράγματα καὶ καιροὺς ἅμα συνάπτουσαι (Aphthon. 37.17). As is well known, scholarly opinion is divided into two opinions: on one side are those who favour the spring, such as Gerstinger, Maas, and Schissel<sup>66</sup>; on the other the supporters of autumn, such as Wifstrand, Keydell, and Heitsch<sup>67</sup>, who goes so far as to entitle the piece “*Descriptio diei autumnalis*”, followed with new arguments by Livrea<sup>68</sup>. It seems impossible to disprove the case of the first group in the face of the crystal-clear spring *Stimmung* in such lines as these (3.71-89), which can stand comparison<sup>69</sup> with the bucolic threnody by Cyrus of Panopolis (*A.P.* 9. 136, cf. 9. 363), or with the springtime reawakening of nature in Nonnos, *D.* 3.1-34:

<sup>64</sup> See Millar 1969, 16-8; Watts 2008, 83 and n.

<sup>65</sup> Dam.E 126 Z. = 85 A A.

<sup>66</sup> The exact classifying of the poem was the work of Schissel 1929, 1078. Rather than Longus, or Ausonius' *Mosella*, or Synesius *ep.*148, I would cite Men.Rhet. 408.16-9 Russell-Wilson: ἐὰν δὲ μετόπωρον, ὅτι καὶ νῦν οὐρανὸς γαμεῖ τὴν γῆν ὄμβροισι ἐπάροδον, ἵνα μετὰ μικρὸν ἐκφύσῃ καὶ κοσμήσῃ. αὐτὴν δένδροισι τε καὶ βλαστήμασιν.

<sup>67</sup> Gerstinger 1928, 10ff.; Maas 1929, 251; Schissel 1929, 1078. We can add Cameron 2007, 232.

<sup>68</sup> Wifstrand 1933, 562; Heitsch, 1961, 111-2.

<sup>69</sup> The setting of the Pleiades in line 26 Πληιαδὰς δ' ἔκρυψε παλίνσ[τρ]οφος ὄρθιός ἄξων cannot in fact be taken to imply the autumn season, because it serves only to indicate that the dawn is near. See the references in Livrea 1977, 496 and n. 12.

ἦδη γὰρ νεφέων ἀνεφαίνετο μεσσόθι κύκλος  
 ἄκρον ἐρευθ[ι]όων, λεπτή δ' ἀνεθήλεεν αἶγλη  
 βοσκομένη τινὰ χῶρον ὅσον νέφος ἐκτός ἐρύκει,  
 . . .]. ἐρίην δ' ὄ[ι]ξεν ἀνήλυσιν· ἡελίου δέ  
 . . . . . ]ν ἔλαμψε βωόπιδος οἶα σελήνης, 75  
 πλησιφαῆς] δ' ἥστραφεν οἰστεύουσα κολώνας  
 ακ[. . . . .]εουσα, μόγις δ' ἐκέδασσεν ὀμίχλην<sup>70</sup>  
 ὑψόθεν ἀμφιέλικτον, ἀλαμπέα μητέρα πάχνης·  
 πᾶσα [δὲ γαῖα γ]έλασσε, πάλ[ι]ν μείδησε γαλήνη·  
 ἡέρ[α δ' ἡέλιος παλιναυξέ]ος ἔμπλεον αἶγλης 80  
 θερμότη[ερον ποίησε, πάλ]ιν δ' ἀνεπάλλετο δελφίς<sup>71</sup>  
 ἡμιφανῆς ῥοθί[οι]σ[ι] καὶ ἡέρι πόντον ἐρέσσω·  
 στέρνα δὲ νυμφάων ἐζώσατο παντρόφον αἶγλην  
 μαρναμένην χιόνεσσι, φύσις δ' ἡμειπτο χαλάζης  
 εἰς ῥόον ὀμβρήεντα, χιῶν δ' ἐτινάσσετο γαίη 85  
 φέγγει νικηθεῖσα, βιαζομένη δὲ γαλήνη  
 ἔρρε ποικιλόδακρυς ἀνηγαμένη μόθον αἶγλης·  
 πηγᾶν δὲ τένοντες ἐμυκήσαντο ῥεθέροις  
 στεινόμενοι νιφάδεσσι διπετέων προχοῶν<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> Cf., in a metaphysical sense, Procl.H. 4.6 νεύσατ' ἐμοὶ φάος ἀγνὸν ἀποσκέδασαντες ὀμίχλην, and also 1. 39-41 αἰεὶ δ' ὑμετέροισιν ἀλεξικάκοισιν ἀρωγαῖς· | ψυχῇ μὲν φάος ἀγνὸν ἐμῇ πολυόλβον ὀπάζεις | ἀχλὺν ἀποσκέδασας ὀλεσίμβροτον, ἰολόχευτον. Cf. also *In Parm. I*, col. 617.1-618.13 Cousin, *Theol. Plat.* 2.7, p.48. 14-5 Saffrey-Westerink οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἐστὶν τὸ φῶς ἢ μετουσία τῆς θείας ὑπάρξεως, *In Remp.* I, p., 271. 26-9 καὶ ἔοικεν ἔλλαμψις εἶναι τῆς ὑπερουσίου τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῆς δι' ἣν καὶ τοῖς νοητοῖς ὑπάρχει μετουσία τῆς ἐκείνης καὶ τοῖς νοοῦσιν, ἐνοποῖς οὖσα τούτων αὐτῶν καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα. On the mystic value of ἀχλὺς, a rich selection of passages is offered by Agosti 2011,33-50.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Choric. *Or.* 6.47 Foerster-Richtsteig: ἐγὼ καὶ τὴν παροῦσαν ὥραν τοῦ ἔτους φαιδρύνειν οἶμαι τὰ δρώμενα. ὃ τε χειμέριος ἀχλὺς ἐκποδῶν εὐπρόσωπός τε θάλλουσα δένδροις ἢ γῆ, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχει ἰχθῦς ... νῦν ἄλυποί τε καὶ προσηνεῖς πνέουσιν αὔραι, τοῦ μὲν ἕαρος λείψανον, τοῦ δὲ θέρους προοίμιον. Cf. also the comm. of Chuvin 1991 and Gigli Piccardi 1985 on Nonn. *D.* 3.26 σιγαλέης δελφίνα κυβιστητήρα γαλήνης. Cf. also 15 ἐγέλασσε ... ἄνθος. (It has to be remembered that Nonnos is describing the spring in the Taurus, that is, in the heart of Isauria!)

<sup>72</sup> It seems appropriate to offer a plain translation of these very difficult lines, even though to do the passage full justice would call for the creative scholarship of a Gerard Manley Hopkins combined with the linguistic exuberance of a Dylan Thomas: "Now, in the midst of the clouds, there began to appear an orb, ruddy, but only at its rim: / then a slight glow spread, ranging over all the expanse of sky that

71 νεφεωνανεφαινετο Π, disp. Horna: (νεφέων iam coniecerat Maas) : νεφελῶδης φαίνετο Gerstinger : νεφέλων διεφαίνετο Radermacher | κύκ[λος Gerstinger || 72 ἐρευ[θτόων] Gerstinger | αἵ[γλη Gerstinger || 73 ερυκει Π : ἐρύκει[ν Keydell. papyro obstante || 74 αἰθ[ερίην Gerstinger, quod in vestigia non quadrat: ἡερίην Horna, brevius spatium: an χει[μερίην (-ει- ex ι) ? || 75 ἀύγη πρῶτον] sive αἵγλη βαίδην ἔλ[α]μψε Gerstinger || 76 πλησιφαῆς] Livrea : ἀύξομένη] dub. Keydell: λαμπρότερον Wifstrand, ft. longius spatium: ὑπίπορος], deinde ὑψίπορου] Gerstinger || 77 ἀκ[τίσιν βολ]έουσα sive ἀκ[τάς τε κλον]έουσα Gerstinger : ἀκ[ροτέρη προθ]έουσα Wifstrand, spatium ratione neglecta || 78 ὑψόθε[ν ἀμφι]έλικτον Gerstinger || 79 πᾶσα [δὲ γαῖα γέλασσε Maas: πᾶσα[ν δ' ἀτμίδ' ] ἔλασσε Gerstinger | πάλ[ιν] Gerstinger : παλ[ιμ]μειδῆς <δ> ἐ Wifstrand || 80 ἠέ[ρα Gerstinger | δ' ἠέλιος παλιναυξέ]ος Livrea : δ' ἠέλιος πυριλαμπέ]ος Gerstinger : δὲ στορέσασα (sive λαμπρόνασα) πυραυγέ]ος Wifstrand : δεξαμένη πυριλαμπέ]ος Keydell | αἵ[γλη]ς Gerstinger || 81 θερμοτ[έρον] ποίησε Livrea : θερμοτ[έροις ἀκτῖ]σι, πάλ[ιν] Keydell: θερμοτ[έτην] ἄλα τεύξε, πάλ[ιν] Wifstrand : θέρωμε [τε καὶ πέλαγος: νη]σὶν Gerstinger || 82 - [σ]ι καὶ disp. Keydell : ῥο[θίοισιν ἐν] Gerstinger || 83 ν[υ]φάων Gerstinger | ἐζώσατο disp. Keydell, Horna : ἐζώσατο (sic) bis Gerstinger || 84 ημιπτο Π, corr. Gerstinger || 85 γαίη Keydell : γαίη[ς] sive αἵγλη Gerstinger || 86 φθεγγεῖ θ ερασο Π || 87 ποικιλόδ[α]κ[τ]ο[υ]ς Gerstinger | μ[ό]θο[ν] Gerstinger || 88 ῥ[ε]έ[θ]ροις Gerstinger ||

If on the other hand lines such as 42, 60, 180-92 refer to an atmosphere almost more wintry than autumnal, how are we to escape from this impasse? Though we are of course deprived, because of the fragmentary state of the papyrus, of many points of transition, we may imagine that Pamprepios' purpose was to represent within the context of a single imaginary day, all four seasons, exploiting the ambiguity of ὥραι (= 'hours of the day' = *Tageszeiten* and also 'seasons of the year' = *Jahreszeiten*), blending them into a single baroque composition – a little like Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. Unfortunately, we are not able to point to any parallel for such a bizarre conception, but something similar could be

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the clouds did not fence / off, and it opened up a pathway in the heavens; the sun light < at first > shone weakly like / that of the ox-eyed moon, then its full power blazed out, firing volleys of sunbeams at the / hilltops; even so it struggled to disperse the mist, murky mother of frost, swirling in the / heights. All the earth beamed with gladness, and the calm sea smiled back. The sun heated / the air till it was suffused with its renewed glow. Once more the dolphin began to leap up, / displaying half its body as it plied its way between waves and sky. Nymphs girded / their breasts just with the sun all-nourishing radiance, that same radiance which waged war / on the snows; the hail too was transformed into pouring rain, and the snow, / vanquished by the light, fell to the ground where, overpowered by the / warmth, it flowed away, dissolved into thousands of tears, declining to fight with the / sunlight. The sinews of the springs groaned out at the floods / overwhelmed by the snow that / had become teaming rivers.”



found in the various Ἐφημερίδες and Δωδεκαητίδες, the Orphic-Pythagorean flavour of which must have been very congenial to the Neoplatonists: cf. for instance Procl. in Hes. *Op.* 765-8, p.232.22 Pertusi=Plut. fr. 101 Sandbach=Orph. fr. 753 T, 2.2 p. 301 Bernabé: καὶ οὐχ ὅλας ἡμέρας μόνον ὑπέλαβόν τινες εὐκαιρίαν ἔχειν πρὸς καταρχάς τινων πράξεων, ἀλλὰ καὶ μόρια τῆς ἡμέρας, ὅτε μὲν τὰ ἐθωνὰ ἐπαινοῦντες, ὅτε δὲ τὰ περὶ δειλὴν ὄψιαν, ὅπου δὲ καὶ ταῖς μὲν θεοῖς οἰκεῖα τὰ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν εἰρήκασιν, ἤρῳσι δὲ τὰ μετὰ μεσημβρίαν. Moreover, Time and its sub-divisions were the subject of the speculations of Proklos and his successors: there survive some fragments of Damaskios, Περὶ ἀριθμοῦ καὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου, in *Simpl. In Phys.* CAG 9.601-45, 773-800, cf. in part. 799.6-7<sup>73</sup>. But we can also refer to the 'Four Seasons' sarcophagi, like the famous one in Dumbarton Oaks, studied by Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, Cambridge 1952: in this case the *ekphrastic* nature of the Pamprepian epyllion might reveal us a lost work of art of particular importance.

It will be rewarding to resume the survey of some Neoplatonic<sup>74</sup> motifs which abound in large numbers in the poem fr. 3. The most significant, I believe, is one which coincides with the historical Pamprepios, that of the μεγάλοι ἐλπίδες, which alludes to the soteriological rites in the context of agricultural rituals of the Eleusinian kind, described in line 153, but with a universal application, cf. Dam. fr. 294 Z. = 113 C A.: οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι ὠρθοῦντο πρὸς τὰ ἀρχαῖα ταῖς ἐλπίσιν, 295 Z. = 113 A.: ὄργανον ὁ Παμπρέπιος ἐπιτήδειον τῆς πρὸς τὸ κάλλιον ἀντιπνεούσης ἀνάγκης, 296 Z. = 113 H A. 'κατὰ τὸν ἰκνούμενον χρόνον' ἀντὶ τοῦ 'κατὰ τὸν ἐπιόντα'. Extremely significant, in my view, is the Orphic-Pythagorean flavour of the very difficult lines 136-8:

οὕτω πανδαμάτειρα φύσις πειθίμ[ο]νι τέχνῃ  
 ἐξ ὀρέων ἐς ἄροτρα βοῶν ἐβίησατο φύτλην  
 ὦμ]οβόρω τίκτουσαν εὐοικότα τέκνα λ[οχ]εῖη.

This seems to be an original notion, that the generation of plants occurs thanks to the cleaving of the earth achieved by the ploughing oxen, who thus bring into being all that is necessary for life: the birth of these τέκνα

<sup>73</sup> In addition to the important research of Galperine 1980, 325-41, see the commentary of Westerink-Combes on Dam. *De prim.princ.* (Paris, 1986) i. XLV.

<sup>74</sup> On the ἐπτάνοος lyre in 3.8, see Livrea 1975, 36, arguing against Gerstinger's banalizing ἐπτατόνοιο.

makes them akin, εἰκότα, to the creatures brought forth by the painful process of birth (ὠμοβόρω λοχείη) in mammals. The daring compression avoids the explicit mention of the seed (though see immediately after this passage lines 144-45: ἀνδ]ρομέης ἔσπειρ[ε<sup>75</sup>..... θρε]πτῆρα γενέθλης | ῥ]αίνων ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα φυτοσπόρα δῶρα θεαίνης), but the concept is very simile to that developed by Euxitheos in Aen. Gaz. *Theophr.* p.58.18ff. Colonna: ἢ οὐχ ὀρᾶς ὅτι καὶ ὁ σῖτος, ὅταν αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνθρωποι σπείραντες γῆ κρῦψωσιν, αὐτὸς μὲν ἐφθάρη καὶ ἐξεχύθη καὶ τέθνηκεν, ὁ δὲ δημιουργικὸς αὐτοῦ λόγος... ἀναζωπυρεῖ κατασβεσθέντα τὸν σῖτον.... καὶ ἀπλῶς ἄνω τὸν κάτω σῖτον αὐθις βιῶναι πεποίηκε; Cf. also Greg. Nyss. *De opif.* 117. In this way Pamprepios is able to renew two anthology pieces like the *rhesis* of Aphrodite in Aesch. *Dan.* fr. 44 Radt or the anapaests of the chorus in Eur. *Chrys.* fr. 839 Kannicht, Lucr.2.991-1005, etc.<sup>76</sup>

Utterly Neoplatonic is the concept that Nature πείθει... καὶ τὰ κακῆς ὕλης βλαστήματα χρηστὰ καὶ ἐσθλά (*Or. Chald.* fr.88 des Places). What is one to say of the αἴγλη, the luminous splendour which appears in every passage of the poems (3.27, 72, 80, 83, 87, 165, 168 c., 4.8, 2), just as the φάος ἀγνὸν καὶ ἀναγάγιον is the protagonist of the *Hymns* of Proklos, and the αἰθερίη αἴγλη plays a similarly dominant part in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (fr.213 des Places)<sup>77</sup>? Also, in the striking scene of the leafy hair of the Hamadryads dripping with snow (fr. 3.8-99):

οὐχ ὀράας ὅσος ὄμβρος [ἐμὴν κατὰ φυλλάδ]α λόχμην  
ἡμετέρης ἔντοσθεν ἀποστ[άξει πλο]καμῖδος;

<sup>75</sup> I would now fill the lacuna with γύαις, which fits the space perfectly and occurs after the feminine caesura in Ap.Rh. 1.796, 1215, 2.810. Even though it is missing in Nonnos, Pamprepios could read the term in *Or. Chald.* 107.1, 146.4 des Places.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. also Eur. fr. 898, 941 Kannicht.

<sup>77</sup> The Sun is mentioned explicitly in 3.70, 84, 168, and, above all, in 4.8 in connection with the *ordalia Rhenana* of the Germans. Rather than as representing spiritual enlightenment and purification, as sought by Proklos, *H.1.33-35, Theol.Plat.2.11*, p.64.19-22 Saffrey-Westerink, Pamprepios will have visualised the Sun as a fellow-worker in his magical and divinatory activities, as it was for Anthusa of Cilicia, who invoked it before divination (Dam.E 69 Z.= 52 A.) and for the iatrosophist Asklepiodotus and Isidore, who, after being swept away in the waters of the Maeander, were miraculously transported to the shores by the Sun (Dam. E 116 Z. = 81 A.).

One can point to a parallel in a Neoplatonic “vision”, Dam. E 93 Z. = 72 E A.: Ἀσκληπιάδης ἔφρασκεν ἑωρακέναι πλόκαμον ἐν τῷ Νεΐλῳ ποταμῷ δαιμόνιον τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὸ κάλλος. αὐθις δέ ποτε παρὰ τὸν Νεΐλον ἐστιωμένοις ἀμφοτέροις (sc. Asclepiadi et Heraisco) (παροῆν δὲ ἐκ τρίτων καὶ ὁ ἡμέτερος φιλόσοφος (sc. Isidorus)) ἀνέδρομεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ πλόκαμος ὡς ἰδεῖν πεντάπηχυς.

In addition to the encomiastic genre and the *ekphrastic* epyllion, our author also composed historical epic. Indeed, I am now inclined to believe that fr. 1 verso, 1 recto and 2, which McCail<sup>78</sup> assigned to an anonymous poet who celebrated Zeno after Pamprepios’ death in 484 and subsequently on the defeat of the Isaurians Illos and Leontios in 489/90, can instead be attributed without undue difficulty to the *Isaurica* of Pamprepios. This is not the place to deal with such a complex question: for example, the cave of 1 v.8: ἔδυσαν ὑπὸ σπήλυγγα μελάθρων, far from being an allusion to the castle of Papirios, could refer to Zeno’s hideout during Basiliskos’ usurpation, first at Urba(?) and later at Sbide(?) in the Isaurian dekapolis<sup>79</sup>, and if he is the βασιλεύς of 1r 15, the poets mentioned at 1v 21 will be the learned men attracted to his court, amongst whom were Marsus and Pamprepios himself, perhaps even Illos; the imperial γαλήνη of 1r 25 could be a reference to the comparative leniency of Zeno’s reprisals against the usurper Basiliskos<sup>80</sup>. The sudden appearance of Armatos, a cousin of Verina, at the head of a powerful army at Nicaea could be the reason for Zeno’s loss of hope – indeed, he was actually thinking of abdicating (1r 24-5: πᾶσα δὲ λωβητῆρι περιζωσ[θεῖσα χαλινῷ / ἐλπῶρῃ δεδόνητο γαληναίῳ [βασιλῆι]), until the treason of Illos and Trocundos, the support of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, and the nomination of Armatos as *magister militum praesentalis*, once again turned the tables in the emperor’s favour. And the comparison with Odysseus (1r 19 : ἦμ . . . [ . . . ἐτέλεσσα]ς ἃ μὴ κάμε διος Ὀδυσσεύς) could be concealing an ennobling etymology of the barbarian Tarassicodissa, ὁ Κοδιτσεύς in *Chron. Pasch.* 599.12. The mention of the Persians in 1r 14 could be a reminder of the fact that Zeno’s success at the court of Leo I began when he denounced Aspar’s son Ardabur, the then *magister militum per Orientem*, for collusion with the Persians, and was rewarded with the title of *comes domesticorum* and

<sup>78</sup> McCail 1978, 38-63.

<sup>79</sup> See Lippold 1972, 161.

<sup>80</sup> It is true that Basiliskos was exiled with his wife and son to Cappadocia, where he starved himself to death (Cand. fr. 1 B.), but see Lippold 1972, 162.

the hand of Ariadne in marriage. The reference to Egypt in 1r 8 could be an allusion to the decisive support given by Zeno to Timotheos Salophakiolos, the patriarch of Alexandria in 478, but another possibility is that it may refer to Pamprepios' mission, described above, in which case πυμάτην could suggest a reference by Pamprepios to his native Thebaid. The mention of the Latins in 1v 7 would appear to be an allusion to the complex question of sovereignty in the West after the killing of Orestes and Odoacer's seizing of power, and sending of the imperial *insignia* to Constantinople. All these detailed possibilities deserve of course to be investigated and their implications considered; but the large questions are when and where would Pamprepios have written his *Isaurica*? An appropriate time seems to be the period following the short-lived revival of his fortunes at court in 478, following the return of Illos<sup>81</sup>: the latter's opposition to Zeno during the greater part of later events makes any other date unsuitable, unless Pamprepios wished to deal with the 'archeology' of Isaurian power at Byzantium; but this would make it impossible to make sense of all the events which surface in the fragmentary papyrus. A convincing *terminus post quem* could be represented – in 479, during the revolt of Marcian – by the mention of the stoning of Illos' troops (1r 28-31): his house had been burnt down by the common people of Constantinople, out of hatred of the Isaurians<sup>82</sup>; cf. Joh. Ant. fr. 211.3 M. = 303. 48-50 R. = 234 p. 426.28-30 M. καὶ ὁ τῆς πόλεως ὄμιλος ἐκ τῶν δομάτων διὰ πάσης ὕλης ἐχώρει κατὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀγωνιζομένων, Malch. fr. 22 B.:

ἐμφύ[λου] στονόεσσαν ἐδύσατο λ[ύ]σσαν ἐνουῶς  
 εἰρήνης ἀδίδακτον ὁμήλικα λάε[σι] τύψας·  
 οὐ μὲν λᾶας ἔπαλλεν ἐθήμον[α]ς . [·]  
 δήμου ξεῖνον ἄθυμα φονοσ[ταγέος]

<sup>81</sup> It may well have been Illos' triumph, or Zeno's victory over the usurper Basiliskos, that provided the motivation for the *Isaurica*, as Cameron 1965, 481 and Kaster 1988, 209 n.36 suggest. However, I do not accept that "ein Prosa-Epos ist nicht undenkbar" (Feld 2002, 275 and n. 26). On the other hand, the second-person apostrophe to the emperor in 1r 15-6 would appear to rule out the possibility of the poem's dealing with the exploits of Illos. The exceedingly short duration of Pamprepios' success at court in 478 might lead one to think not so much of the editing, but rather of the publication of a poem that had been already edited beforehand.

<sup>82</sup> We hear of rioting in the Circus in 473, in the course of which many Isaurians were massacred, cf. Marcell. *Chron.* s.a. 473, and Livrea on 1r 30, p.42.

Moreover, the σύγκρισις with the “wise Constantine” in 2.2 (cf. 1r 16) would be possible only in a βασιλικὸς λόγος, nor would it be possible to omit a reference to Zeno’s wish to effect a reconciliation between Chalcedonians and monophysites as an indication of Constantine’s old theology. But all this discussion must be postponed until it can be the object of a deeper investigation. It is a mere guess that fr. 1-2 belong to a λόγος ἐπιβατήριος<sup>83</sup>.

In conclusion: it should have become clear that it is impossible (though, unfortunately, frequently attempted) to reconstruct a historical character of the importance of Pamprepios by completely leaving out of consideration the examination of *P. Gr. Vindob.29788 A – C* along with the remains of the four poems which it offers us. Their chronology might be established as follows:

*Encomium Theagenis* (fr. 4): before 476.

*Isaurica* (fr. 1-2): between 478-9.

*Epyllium* (fr. 3): immediately before 482.

The points of contact between the most disparate historical sources and the verses attributed, correctly, to Pamprepios by Gerstinger, confirm for us that one and the same cultural and factual context envelops the two groups of testimonies. To fail to take account of the papyrus, as shown by the unfortunate examples of *PLRE*, Kaster, and Feld, is to condemn oneself to a one-sided view of Pamprepios which relies entirely on external evidence, whereas the acknowledgement of the true value of the Viennese find throws much light on almost every event in the tortuous life of Pamprepios, and at the same time draws from it basic exegetic material. History-writing and literary scholarship should therefore go forward in close accord, without either being ruled out of the other’s sphere: but this, alas, is a warning which very few are capable of heeding.

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<sup>83</sup> Zumbo 2007, 1063-75 offers one convincing sample, *P. Vindob. 29788 a-c*.

## **II.**

### **NEW AND OLD BELIEFS AND IDEAS**

# BAR SAUMA VERSUS DUSHARA: THE CHRISTIANISATION OF PETRA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

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The continued existence of the cult of the Nabataean gods, as well as the introduction of Christianity in Petra and the southern region of the present-day Jordan, were issues which, until recently, were only known thanks to a few literary accounts with hardly any archaeological evidence. Nonetheless, the results of the excavations that have been taking place over the last decades allow us to address this matter from a wider perspective. The whole of what the Nabataean territory once was is not going to be the topic of the present work, as that would have to include sites which are famous for the abundance of all types of remains of Christianity: we only have to recall the Byzantine churches of Madaba, Mount Nebo and Umm ar-Rasas. On the contrary, the area chosen is that part where the introduction and spread of Christianity is less known and corresponds to the most peripheral region: far from Jerusalem, the Holy Land and the biblical sites. Namely, the north-south axis starting from Aqaba and heading north, going through Hawara, Petra, Augustopolis and Phaino, following the *Via Nova Traiana*. This area, the former capital of the Nabataean kingdom and its surroundings, experienced administrative changes after Rome's annexation of Nabataea. First, this territory was part of the province of Arabia, later of Palestine, and finally part of *Palaestina Salutaris*, also known as Tertia. Chronologically, our starting point is the year 106 AD, when Emperor Trajan ordered the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom.

The archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of temples built throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, temples which symbolise Roman domination. There is clear evidence of this in Petra where, in the heart of the city, very close to the three known Nabataean temples (*Qasr al-Bint*,

the Temple of the Winged Lions and the Great Temple), a Roman temple was built, the so-called “Small Temple”<sup>1</sup>. Although its state of preservation is fairly poor, the section that still remains (the access stairway and the foundations of the building) has been sufficient to determine that it was a square temple, hexastyle and located on a podium. One of its most significant features is the abundance of marble employed in its construction and decoration, which is estimated in more than a tonne and which was imported mainly from the isles of Marmara Sea. Besides, thanks to an incomplete inscription found on a marble plaque (Panel 02-1-2 PLT) mentioned by Emperor Trajan, the construction of the temple has been dated right after the annexation. However, the most significant aspect is that it is a building dedicated to imperial cult (Reid, 2005, 169).

Moreover, in Petra itself and inside the temenos of the Nabataean temple of *Qasr al-Bint*, an exedra with remains of sculptures and inscriptions has been found, among which two monumental Greek inscriptions devoted to emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus stand out. Among the statues, we could highlight the colossal head (twice as big as its life-size) and various fragments (a hand, a foot) of Marcus Aurelius. Besides, a bearded bust has been identified as the representation of Aelius Caesar, adopted by Adrianus and father of Lucius Verus (Kreikenbom, 2002, 198). Judging from these findings, it is more than likely that Petra’s exedra was dedicated to the imperial family, as it is the case with the exedra of Shahba-Philippopolis in Syria (Zayadine, 2002, 213). This would be, therefore, another indication of the imperial cult and propaganda.

As far as we know (as 90% of Petra is still buried underneath the sand), these are the main religious symbols (and most eloquent ones) of the new Roman Rule in the city. Otherwise, the existing Nabataean temples continued to be active, as well as those of High Places, considered to be the most ancient religious centres in Petra. Accordingly, the coexistence of the Roman cult and the ancient Nabataean cults took place without problems.

And this was not unique to Petra. Towards the south, half-way between Petra and Aqaba’s port in the Red Sea, in the deserted region of Hisma, was the Nabataean caravan station of Hawara, which came to be designated as Haurra after the annexation (present-day Humayma).

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<sup>1</sup> The Small Temple was excavated by Sara Karz Reid, of Brown University, between 2000 and 2002.



Humayma was first excavated in 1986 and the works continue nowadays<sup>2</sup>. The Romans built a *castellum*, and from this standpoint they could observe up to 15 kms of the *Via Nova Traiana*. This construction also took place right after the annexation, during the time of Traianus (which makes it the oldest *castellum* in Jordan). The *vicus*, the civil establishment in the service of the fort dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, has also been excavated: in particular, a great *insula* (E125) situated on the south of the *castellum* (Oleson, 2008, 312-316). As part of this *insula*, in the southeast sector, a sanctuary or Roman temple (Room H) has been found, built on a prior Nabataean structure which was itself possibly a temple too. In fact, this was one of the most significant findings of the archaeological campaign carried out in the year 2000. It dates from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century or start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The entrance to this enclosure was on the eastern side, through a 20 metre-long processional path, until reaching an open courtyard in which we find a religious building (whose western side was in the open air). The walls were decorated with geometrically-shaped frescoes. The structure of this Roman sanctuary matches that of some Nabataean sanctuaries (like *Khirbet et-Tannur*) and it could be compared with the arrangement of Russian dolls: a space inside another space, becoming smaller and smaller.

In the inside was a large betyl (0,58m), arranged on a base and situated in the centre of the room. It was next to an altar with a Latin inscription devoted to Jupiter Ammon by a *vexillatio* of the *Legio Tertia Cyrenaica*. Also, a truncated column was found, including a Greek inscription to Serapis, made by a certain Apollo, son of Dioskoro. The presence of the betyl, which obviously represents a Nabataean deity, together with the Latin and Greek inscriptions, and the fact that the Roman sanctuary was possibly built on a previous Nabataean temple, suggest that both Roman soldiers and civilian population would come here in order to worship their gods: those who protected the Roman settlement, and also Nabataean gods (Reeves, 2009b, 333).

The sanctuary was in use at least until the mid-third century, according to a coin of Philip the Arab found inside. From then on, there began a period of abandon which lasted between 20 and 50 years and which affected not only the sanctuary but also the whole *insula* to which it is associated. Oleson (2008, 313) links the reason of the abandon with the

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<sup>2</sup> Until 2005 the team was headed by J. P. Oleson of the University of Victoria in Canada. Since 2005, by Barbara Reeves of Queen's University.

departure of the military garrison somewhere else, in such troubled times as those of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (when Zenobia's expansion took place).

Thus, the evidence provided by archaeology suggests that the transformation of the area into a Roman province did not substantially alter the religious landscape. We know now that a temple and an exedra were erected in Petra, consecrated to imperial cult and to honour the glory of the emperors. We are also informed that in the temple of Humayma, both Nabataean gods and gods venerated by the Romans coexisted in the same building in an unproblematic *concordia*.

## 1. The emergence of Christianity

The appearance of the first sign of Christianity is to be found further south, by the Red Sea. There we find the port of Aqaba, Nabataean Aila, called Aelana by the Romans (the southern *terminus* of the *Via Nova Traiana*). The archaeological excavations are gradually bringing to light the remains of this remarkable city, but the task is not easy since, having been continuously inhabited since ancient times, the old structures lie underneath the modern buildings. In fact, the exact location of the Byzantine city is not known at the moment, but some isolated findings belonging to this age are quite remarkable, such as the so called "oldest known structure designed and built as a church" (Parker, 1998b, 254).

The oldest known churches seem to have been household structures, that is to say, houses turned into churches, like the house-church of Dura Europos, dating from 240. In Palestine, the most ancient churches were built around the year 325 following an order by Helena, Constantine's mother, after the persecution of 303-311 initiated by Diocletian. However, according to the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea, large churches had already been erected in many cities before the persecution, between the years 260 and 303 (*H. E.* 8, 1,5).

In Aqaba, the excavations led by Th. Parker (North Carolina State University) in sector J of the city during the campaigns of 1994 and 1996 brought to light a structure built on a stone base, with adobe walls. The ground plan of the building (26x16 metres) was identified by Parker from the first moment as that of a possible Christian basilica with a central nave and two lateral naves, similar to others also built with adobe in Egypt: "If this structure is in fact a church (and this remain unproven), it is the earliest church yet known in Jordan and one of the earliest known in the world" (Parker, 1998a, 383). The subsequent campaigns have confirmed the date of the construction of the building between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, on the basis of the pottery

found and a coin attributed to Diocletian (Parker, 2000, 383; *vid.*, the ground plan of the building on p. 385). Additionally, the progress of the excavations has confirmed the identification of the building: “the eastward orientation of the structure, the overall plan, and some artifactual evidence (such as many fragments of glass oil lamps) all suggest that the building was designed as a Christian church (...) quite possibly the oldest purpose-built church in the world” (Parker, 2002, 418; Parker, 2003, 326).

This finding has generated interest and it stands out among the more than 150 Byzantine churches that have been listed over the last 10 years in present-day Jordan. More recently, David L. Chatford Clark (University of Surrey Roehampton, UK) has studied this “putative church”.

Aqaba is a putative late Roman, early Byzantine church. Its first phase, mid-third century AD, dates it as one of the earliest church structures that we have in history. Its evolution from a 'domestic house church' to an expanded mud-brick architectural structure provides the initial key in the evolutionary praxis of this region's church architecture. The eastern wall of the Phase One building was structurally modified c. AD 290 to access a large area as a new sanctuary. This area was enclosed by new, ancillary, purpose-built rooms. The additional rooms toward the east surrounded the space as the sanctuary, and provided space for the clergy area and adjacent storage and devotional rooms. The sanctuary area, larger in size than the previous assembly area, was demarcated by a lowered floor rather than a raised platform. The ambo space remained in the original assembly area. A baptistery existed off an episcopal courtyard residence on the western side. A double doorway provided the main entrance into the structure. The massive mud-brick structure measured 26m east-west and 16m north-south. It was destroyed in the earthquake of AD 363 (Parker, 2003, 323-33). This putative development may have adopted, or initially set, the evolutionary pattern of the regional, basilican structures (Clark, 2007, 89-90).

It was therefore a church built before the persecution initiated by Diocletian (303-311) which resulted in the removal of many buildings. Yet, the church of Aqaba might have been saved on account of its peripheral location within the Empire. Besides, this confirms the first documentary evidence of Christianity in Aqaba: the reference to Bishop Petros at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, which suggests the existence of a significant Christian community in this early stage. Thus, within the analysed area, it is in Aqaba that we find the first evidence of Christianity.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century on, there has been relevant textual evidence about Christians, such as the information provided by Eusebius of Caesarea, who writes about the Feinan mines.

Feinan (Roman Phaino), about 40 kms north of Petra, is a distressing place, covered with tonnes of waste resulting from millennia of labour (from the Neolithic to the Muslim period) mining for copper. The arrival of the Romans intensified the production by means of hiring people convicted *ad metallum* together with free workers. As a matter of fact, Phaino was one of the largest mining centres in the Roman Middle East. Moreover, according to Eusebius of Caesarea (particularly in *Martyrs of Palestine*, v. gr. VIII append. 7), many Christians were condemned during the persecution of Diocletian. As a matter of fact, Eusebius describes a horrific image of Roman savagery towards the men sentenced to the mines of Phaino (*HE*, 8, 13,5): at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Silvanos, Bishop of Gaza, was decapitated together with other 40 men, on account of a mandate which included all those who, weakened by age or disease, could no longer work.

Basically, the sentence to the mines, above all those of Phaino, seems to have been the worst punishment of all: a delayed death sentence. In the persecution against Arians in Alexandria in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a certain Eutybios was sentenced “and not simply to any mine but to that of Phaino where even a condemned murderer is hardly able to live a few days” (Athanasios, *Discourses against the arians*, 60, 765-766). Yet, although Eusebius writes about the martyrs of Palestine, nowhere does he mention the Christians of the region that concerns us.

Let us now go back to Petra. According to three letters of Libanios, the formation of the province of *Palestina Salutaris* with Petra as its capital dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century (the years 357-358, under Constancy's II), although there is some controversy over this issue. In any case, the first unmistakable reference to the existence of *Palestina Salutaris* is from the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century and comes from Jerome, who, in his *Quaestiones in Genesim* 21.30 (written between 389 and 392 under Theodosios I), when writing about Isaac's birth, mentions “the province recently created Palestine Salutaris”.

In Petra, according to archaeological information, the most renowned Nabataean temples (and also, the important sanctuaries nearby, like Khirbet et-Tannur and Khirbet edh-Dharih) continued active until a dreadful earthquake around the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (the year 363). This quake is mentioned in various sources of the time and, despite affecting a vast area of the territory, it especially affected *Palaestina Tertia*, as evidenced in the manuscript *Harvard Syriac* 99. This manuscript

contains a letter attributed to Cirilus, Bishop of Jerusalem around 350-388, where he describes an earthquake which occurred “at the third hour, and partly at the ninth hour of the night” on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 363 (Russell, 1980, 47). Among the worst hit cities was Petra, mentioned with its Nabataean name: *RQM*.

The archaeological excavations have confirmed the violence and intensity of this seismic phenomenon, which affected and destroyed more than half of the city: houses, the theatre, the high street and its shops, and the large religious buildings. Indeed, the Winged Lions Temple and the Great Temple lay in ruins and were not rebuilt. As far as *Qasr al-Bint* is concerned, according to the most recent publications, it had already been plundered and had suffered a fire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, possibly during the Palmyran revolt in 268-271. After this, it seems that religious activity ceased in the building, since remains of a home have been found in the exedra of the tememos. Eventually, the earthquake of 363 completely ruined the ancient temple (Zayadine *et al.*, 2003a, 117-118). The destruction and neglect of all the temples in Petra appear to have been complete after the year 363. It is true that, considering that most of the city remains to be excavated, there might be other Nabataean temples which have not been discovered yet and which could have been rebuilt after the earthquake. In any case, everything seems to imply that the public practice of paganism suffered a major blow.

## **2. The Continued Existence of Paganism and the Introduction of Christianity in Petra**

However, the destruction of the Nabataean temples did not actually lead to the disappearance of pagan worship in Petra on the 4<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, there is the testimony of Epiphanius of Salamis about the main Nabataean god, Dushara, who continued being worshipped in Petra, namely in the temple of the idol where “they praise the virgin with hymns in the Arab language and call her Chaamu –that is, Core, or Virgin- in Arabic. And the child who is born of her they call Dusares” (*Panarion* 51, 22, 11, in Healey, 2001, p.103).

A debate has emerged among contemporary scholars. On the one hand, we have those who believe that this account of the virgin mother goddess and the son god, narrated by Epiphanius, is based on a religious tradition which is essentially Nabataean (Zayadine, 2003, 60). On the other hand, those who believe it to be an invention of late paganism which emerged under Christian influence (Bowersock, 1990, 26). More recently, Politis has interpreted this account as evidence of the blend of old pagan beliefs

and the new dominant Christian faith. He acknowledges that the description of a virgin who is the mother of Dusares is the confusing narration of a Christian unaware of the cult of Dushara and Allat (the Nabataean goddess, mother of Dushara). And it is also remarkable proof that the Nabataean population had not disappeared and still kept their practices of pagan veneration mixed with Christian elements; that is to say, this population was experiencing a cultural transition (Politis, 2007, 190).

The first evidence of the presence of Christians in Petra significantly dates from this same period as we know that, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of a Christian church was carried out<sup>3</sup>. It has a basilica floor plan (actually, only the building floor has been preserved) and it is called Ridge Church since it is not known to whom it was consecrated (Bikai, 2002, 271-272).

The continued existence of pagan cults in Petra, as they coexisted with a Christian church, might have extended until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, if we follow the account of late sources, such as Sozomenus (400-450), who claims that there were still pagans in many cities, like the inhabitants of Petra in Arabia, who fought relentlessly in favour of their temples (7.15.11-12). We have found again specific references about the existence of temples in Petra when archaeology confirmed that the three known temples had been destroyed and abandoned in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The question is: were there any temples open to the public that still survived in that city? Apparently yes, according to the information provided by Epiphanius and Sozomenus. Yet, as well as these clear references to the survival of paganism in Petra, we have an outstanding account which tells the story of the conversion of Petrans into Christianity. This conversion was the work of a monk named Bar-Sauma, whose biography has been preserved, and attributed to one of his disciples, Samuel. Bar-Sauma was born in the mountains of Mesopotamic Syria, near Samosata. In the year 400 he travelled to Jerusalem, where he was witness to the continued existence of paganism in the Holy Land. “Les païens, à cette époque, étaient nombreux dans le pays de Palestine et dans le pays de Phénicie et des Arabes; les chrétiens étaient encoré peu nombreux dans ces pays” (Grébaut, 1908, 274). Back to his land, Bar-Sauma began to lead a strict ascetic life, living in a cave and fasting strictly, for which he earned the nickname of Bar-Sauma: “Son of Fasting”.

Indeed, Bar-Sauma’s life, like that of other vigorous, uneducated and coarse Christians of the time, was marked by extreme sacrifice and

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<sup>3</sup> It was excavated by ACOR at the end of the last century.

penitence. Bar-Sauma did not eat anything that came from the plough. He nourished himself from fruit and roots and in summer he only ate every two days, while in winter he fasted from Sunday to Sunday. He would never sit or lie down, neither by day nor by night. When sleep overtook him, he would only indulge in resting on his elbows. His hair was so long that it reached down to his feet. He was barefoot and would always wear a solid tunic which made him freeze in winter and burn in summer: his body would burn and boil under the sun rays and he looked like fish fried in a pan or like a sheep whose skin shrinks when in contact with fire (Grébaut, 1908, 274-276; Nau, 1927, 186). And thus he lived for 54 years (403-457).

But the picture that has been conveyed of Bar-Sauma is not merely that of an extreme hermit since, going further beyond, he became the leader of a gang of killer monks who, in defence of their beliefs, ravaged the territories of Syria and Palestina. This is how Leclercq presents him:

“Bar Sauma era un monaco selvaggio, che aveva mobilitato le masse popolari delle regioni in cui viveva... Si trattava di gente rustica armata di bastoni catene e picchetti che Bar Sauma guidava nelle sue spedizioni per le valli prossime all’Eufrate...Il nome di Bar Sauma e dei suoi sodali suscitava terrore in tutto il paese e ispirava raccapriccio nel resto dell’Impero” (Acerbi, 2006, 301).

In the year 419 Bar-Sauma came back to Jerusalem and, together with some of his companions, he devoted himself to burning and destroying temples and synagogues. On his way from Jerusalem to Sinai, between 419-422, he passed through *Palaestina III* and crossed a desert in which “les païens étaient puissants en cet endroit, ils étaient les maîtres des pays et des villes de cette region“ (Nau, 1927, 186). He only refers to one of these cities by its name, the one he calls “grande ville de ce pays, nommé Réqem de Gaia” (Grébaut, 1908, 383). Réqem de Gaia, that is to say Petra and its suburb Gaia (present-day Wadi Musa) as it is known in its old Nabataean name (that is how Eusebius refers to it in his *Onomasticon*, 144).

The account of the expedition to Petra led by Bar-Sauma is as follows: accompanied by 40 fellow Christians who set up a strong military force and were used to hard life following the example of their leader, Bar-Sauma and his companions arrived in Petra. The Petrans must have known something about the demeanours of this gang of Christians because they hurried to close their doors. Having a mere 40 men with him, Bar-Sauma was surprised to see the fear of these inhabitants but, without recoiling, he demanded that the doors be opened and he threatened to burn down the city. If they were in any doubt about the behaviour of these resolute

Christians, this uncertainty must have vanished when faced with such an ultimatum but, naturally, the Petrans refused to grant their request. In that time, so the narration tells us, the city of Petra was in the middle of a drought that lasted 4 years, and Bar-Sauma decided to summon the rain. A prodigy indeed happened when it started to rain, but it was not just any type of rain (which would have sufficed to persuade the Petrans). It poured and poured heavily without intermission until the force of the water managed to knock down the walls of the city. The “prêtres des idoles” were stunned by this miraculous flood, which they interpreted as divine intervention and thus they converted into Christianity. Only one priest resisted, and then her two daughters were possessed by demons. Bar-Sauma cured them by means of another miracle and, as a result, they all became Christians (Grébaut, 1908, 383; Nau, 1927, 187).

Within the role assumed by the monks in the eastern side of the Empire, Bar Sauma’s part was clearly the violent evangelisation by means of armed intervention. This is how the fanatic annihilation of the old religion as well as its places of worship took place (Acerbi, 2006, 300-301). The bloodthirsty persecutions of heretics and the destruction of pagan temples are widely documented in the life of Bar Sauma. Yet, it was not the case of Petra, where prodigies sufficed in order to convert idolaters, and it is not explicitly said that temples were destroyed. Interestingly, after that date there are not any more references to the presence of pagans in Petra. This is the last news about the existence of organised civic paganism in the capital of *Palestina III*.

A few years after the alleged conversion of Petrans to Christianity, another church was added up to the first church known in Petra (the already cited Ridge Church). This time it was not built, but they used one of the ancient Nabataean Royal Tombs excavated in the rock, the so called Urn Tomb. In its enormous interior, few changes were carried out. Three large niches were made onto the rear wall of the tomb, the one in the middle of a larger size, forming a tripartite apse which simulates the apses that culminate the naves of churches. After the transformation was ended, the tomb was consecrated as a church by Bishop Jason on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 446, as stated in an inscription in Greek painted on one of the walls, inscribed in a *tabula ansata*.

The importance and diffusion of Christianity in Petra was increasingly greater, as it is proved by the construction of two new churches at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century: the Petra Church and the Blue Chapel Complex. The



discovery of these churches<sup>4</sup> has substantially changed the image of Petra as held in the Byzantine period. It was believed that, after the earthquake of 363, which caused so much damage in Petra, the city had precariously “survived” throughout the Byzantine period until a new earthquake, in 551, reduced what remained of the city to rubble, causing the people to leave. The end of Petra’s history used to be found in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. However, nowadays the existence of the city is considered to have extended until the arrival of Islam, and there is a large volume of information about Byzantine Petra.

The Blue Chapel Complex is believed to have been the private chapel of the Bishop of Petra, who would have lived in a building constructed next to it. As for Petra Church or Mosaic Church, the largest, it has received this name on account of the two rows of mosaics that decorate the side naves. Throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, alterations were carried out and, as a result, the three churches built in Petra (Ridge Church, Mosaic Church and Blue Chapel Complex) were enlarged. These churches remained operative at least until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> (Bikai, 2002, 273-275).

Yet, not only do we have the existence of these churches as regards Byzantine Petra, but there is also documentary information available. A file was found in an adjoining room to Mosaic Church, containing 140 rolls of charred papyrus written in Greek. They belonged to the private file of a large Petran family, that of the Archdeacon of the church, a certain Theodoros, son of Obodianos. This file may be described as crucial as it practically extends to the whole 6<sup>th</sup> century, and it depicts the active rich existence of the Byzantine city, called (among other terms) “*Metropolis* (of the province) *of Palestina Tertia Salutaris*” (Frösén, 2002, 20). In addition, the papyrus mention the existence of other churches located in the surroundings of Petra, such as the “Church of the Saint and Glorious Martyr Theodoros in Augustopolis” and the “House of our Lord the Saint High Priest Aaron”, which was governed by a *hegoumenos*, implying that there was a monastic community in that place (Bikai, 1996, 487).

Augustopolis, identified with the present-day Jordan town of Udruh, was situated 11 kms east of Petra. A Roman fortress was built there at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or early 4<sup>th</sup> century. The site has hardly been excavated, but the remains of a church (that of martyr Theodoros?) are visible, as well as some Christian symbols. Apparently, it was the seat of a

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<sup>4</sup> Excavations carried out by ACOR in the 1990s.

bishopric, as two bishops both named John of Augustopolis appear in the councils of Ephesus and Jerusalem on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

With regard to the other Christian religious site which is mentioned in the papyrus of Mosaic Church in Petra (the “House of our Lord the Saint High Priest Aaron”), it alludes to Aaron, the brother of Moses. Rightly so, in the surroundings of the city centre, about 5 kms southeast and on top of a mountain which carries his name, Jebel Haroun, there is a small construction which houses a tomb (dated from the 14<sup>th</sup> century) which, according to the tradition, is believed to be that of Aaron. The association of Aaron’s burial place with Petra is mentioned in several ancient sources, such as Flavius Josephus:

“(…) through Arabia; and when he came to a place which the Arabians esteem their metropolis, which ... has now the name of *Petra*, at this place, which was encompassed with high mountains, Aaron went up one of them in the sight of the whole army, Moses having before told him that he was to die, for this place was over against them... and died while the multitude looked upon him” (*Antiquities*, IV, 4, 7).

The reference to the “House of our Lord Aaron” in the papyrus contributed to the start in Jebel Haroun of the JHFP<sup>5</sup>, which currently continues to develop their work on the spot. Some dozens of metres below the summit where the tomb is, the excavations have brought to light an impressive monastic and pilgrimage complex dedicated to Aaron: a basilica consecrated to the brother of the prophet, a small chapel with a cross-shaped baptistery excavated in the rock, rooms for pilgrims, and so on. The complex dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century and remained active, even if undergoing some restructuring, at least until the Umayyad era (Fiema, 2002, 46-47).

This Byzantine monastic and pilgrimage centre of St. Aaron is the only place, within the limits of the analysed area, which can be linked with a Biblical character: this explains the fact that it became a centre of pilgrimage (and thus it remains to this day for Christians, Jews and Muslims).

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<sup>5</sup> Jabal Harun Finish Project, headed by J. Frösén.

### 3. The Process of Christianisation in Humayma and Feinan

In Humayma the *castellum* was abandoned at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but civilian settlements flourished during the Byzantine period. In fact, by the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, according to the Beersheba Edict and the annual tax that the province of Palaestina Tertia (to which Humayma belonged) had to pay, Humayma contributed with 43 gold pieces, the highest sum after the Augustopolis fortress (Mayerson, 1986, 143).

Between the mid-5<sup>th</sup> and mid-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, five churches were built in Humayma. One of them (B126) only preserves its apse, since in the 1930s a house was built above the church. The others have been excavated, although some only partially (B100). The so called Lower Church (C101) is the largest and best preserved and, besides, it has been restored. Far from the site, at the bottom of the slope of one of the mountains situated in the west, there is another Byzantine church, the so called Upper Church (C119), smaller in size and with trapezoidal shape. Finally, a fourth church (F102) has been excavated to the south of the site, and it was remodelled during the Abbasid, Fatimid and Ottoman periods (Schick, 1995, 324-338).

As far as Feinan is concerned, it became a centre of pilgrimage owing to the number of Christian martyrs killed there, which led to the emergence of an active Christian community. It was also the seat of the bishopric of the province *Palaestina III*, as the Bishop of Phaino is mentioned in the councils of the years 431, 449, 518 and 536. Today, as well as the mines entrances and the tonnes of waste, the remains in view are to be found in a place called Khirbet Feinan, a huge mound formed by collapsed carved stones among which we can distinguish the ruins of five Byzantine churches: two on the eastern slope and two more on the western mountainside. The fifth church, which is near the mound, to the west, is called Monastery Church, dated from the year 580 according to an inscription found on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the vicinity there are also hundreds of tombs, many of which are marked with Christian crosses. Yet, although some archaeological works are being carried out in the area, these focus on the Iron Age Kingdom of Edom<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> In the year 2012 (October-November) some excavations have started, under the direction of Thomas Levy and Mohammad Najjar (University of California, San Diego).

The number of known churches in Feinan and Humayma (five in each) might seem excessive bearing in mind the population that could live in both localities. For example, “the analysis of the local and regional water resources suggests an absolute maximum population of 650 people for Humayma. It is possible, however, that the multiplication of churches resulted from competition among Orthodox and heterodox believers in the settlement. It is also possible that some of the churches were built as others went out of use” (Oleson, 1999, 432).

By contrast, in other places only one church is known to have survived. It is the case of Khirbet edh-Dharh which, after its abandonment on the 4<sup>th</sup> century, lived a reoccupation on the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It was there where the ancient Nabataean temple was turned into a church consecrated to Maria Theotokos.

In any case, Christian activity in the area under scrutiny is widely demonstrated between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. But it is in Petra, the capital of *Palaestina III*, where the importance and vitality of Christianity are more clearly confirmed.

#### **4. Further Evidence of Christianity in the Capital of the Province**

Together with the aforementioned churches, there were others in the old city to whom a date cannot be assigned: Umm al-Biyara and Beidha. On the hillside of the great mountain called Umm al-Biyara, which closes to the west the valley where the centre of the city was, some ruins of a Byzantine church are preserved and are perfectly visible. Yet, the site has not been excavated, so we cannot date the construction of this building.

As for the church of Beidha, which was discovered in 2004, it is located 5 kms north of the city, in an area which was used as a caravan station in Nabataean times. A large cave that Nabataeans had excavated in the rock was transformed into a church in that place. The measures of the cave, or rock enclosure, are 10 x 10 x 10 metres. At a particular moment, which we precise accurately, in the eastern wall an apse was excavated, on which a seat or throne (of a bishop?) was placed. A group of holes dug on the wall must have been used somehow to illuminate the room. Also, a two-storey structure with arched ceilings was added at the entrance of the cave (Bikai *et al.*, 2005 and 2009).

When referring to Christian Petra, we should inevitably mention *ed-Deir*, one of the biggest and most famous rock Nabataean monuments located on top of a mountain situated in the northwest. Its name, *ed-Deir*, which stands for “monastery”, might suggest that it was transformed into a

religious centre. Actually, 4 Orthodox monks lived there until 1884 (Politis, 2001, 589).

As a matter of fact, the whole area around *ed-Deir* can be associated with Christianity, because crosses carved in rock and a chapel (on the way up the mountain where *ed-Deir* is) have been found. Therefore, as well as churches bearing witness to the triumph of Christianity in Petra and its surroundings, and adding up to the documented existence of a monastery and a centre of pilgrimage, there are also testimonies of the presence of hermits in Petra.

The chapel is located on the ascent to *ed-Deir*, on the right, in an area called “valley of the chapel” (Klausenschlucht) by G. Dalman. The monument (Dalman, 1908, 259-262 n. 424) has 4 rooms of different sizes excavated in the rock. On one of the walls there is a betyl with an engraved cross with horizontal arms. This implies that he who made that inscription was familiar with the sacred meaning of the betyl: that of exorcising the power of the pagan idol. Although it is difficult to determine the meaning of the whole, it seems evident that Christian hermits lived there at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore, on that same stepped path that leads up to *ed-Deir* there is a gorge, *Qattar ed-Deir*, where water drips from the rock and is deposited in rock cisterns. This was a sacred site for Nabataeans. It included several niches with betyls, some cisterns, a votive inscription devoted to Nabataean king Rabel II and a triclinium. On one of the betyls there is deeply carved cross, with one vertical arm and two horizontal arms, that is to say, the patriarchal cross (Wenning, 2001, 81-82, fig. 2).

Petra was also Episcopal See. We have already mentioned Bishop Jason, who consecrated the Nabataean Urn Tomb as a church in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. In the *Pratum Spirituale*, John Moschos makes reference to bishops such as Asterios, who attended the councils of Serdica (modern Sofia) (343) and Alexandria (362), or Germanus, who attended the council of Seleukeia in 359. One of last bishops must have been Athenogenes, Bishop of Petra at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

In this regard, it should be highlighted that Petra was a place of banishment or “ecclesiastical exile”. Those who followed a faith which did not agree with that of the Christian emperors were sent there. In fact, this fragmented backdrop as regards doctrines and churches (Arians, Niceans, Monophysites, Chalcedonies) is reflected in the banishment of bishops: Flavianus of Antioquia, the Monophysite Maras III of Amida, Nestorios, Bishop of Constantinople, etc. The most common places chosen for these exiles fit perfectly with Petra: they used to be situated in border areas, far from the centre of the Empire, and they used to have an inclement or

extreme climate. Other negative attributes of Petra were its being the seat of the bishopric and, naturally, the fact that its dominant beliefs would have been contrary to those of the exiled.

Finally, one of the oddest references of the *Pratum Spirituale* alludes to Athenogenes of Petra, a stylite. It is said he did not have a ladder for visitors, so those believers who came to see him had to shout from below, at a certain distance. Only for the most personal enquiries could they approach the base of the column (*Pr.* 129). As we see, this ascetic way of life (better documented for Syria) had its followers in *Palaestina III*.

## 5. Conclusions

The process of Christianisation within the area of the study offers an ambiguous image because, although much has been advanced by means of archaeological excavations, there is still a long way to go. A paradigmatic case is that of Aqaba, where there is evidence of the construction of a church as early as the year 300. Yet, no other churches have been found there up to this time.

It was not a process developing slower than in other areas nearby, as the churches of Humayma, which have been dated, were built between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, around the same time as those of Madaba and Umm ar-Rasas (the churches of Phaino and Augustopolis remain to be excavated and are not dated). Regarding the only place where a monastery and pilgrimage centre emerged (consecrated to Aaron), it is from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, like the one on Mount Nebo dedicated to venerating the memory of Moses.

We have more information about Petra, not only on account of its excavations (thanks to which we are now acquainted with three churches: Ridge Church, Blue Chapel Complex and Mosaic Church), but also from the restructuring of old Nabataean rock sites into Christian religious centres (Urn Tomb, Beidha Church, ed-Deir). In addition, we also have accounts like those by Bar Sauma, which are very significant in order to understand the spreading of Christianity in the region. It is also in Petra where we find some manifestations of the diffusion of Christianity, such as the practice of hermitism and the ascetic movement of the stylites, one of the most surprising phenomena of oriental monasticism. The one salient feature, which corresponds with the peripheral position of Petra, is that it was a place of banishment for exiled bishops.

# RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN LATE ANTIQUE EGYPT: URBAN AND RURAL CONTEXTS\*

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The death of Hypatia has been consolidated in the European cultural tradition as a symbol of the violence that characterised the religious atmosphere in Late Antiquity<sup>1</sup>. The circumstances of the crime have been so deeply analysed that it is impossible to present new elements, which could potentially change our knowledge about this particular episode. Consequently, it does not seem feasible for us to formulate an original work hypothesis, so we are only able to reproduce the proposals already produced by scholars (Watts, 2005a, 337-342).

The relevance given to her tragic end has conditioned the reconstruction of the religious landscape in the Late Empire to such an extent that it has been presented as the event marking the end of paganism. Nevertheless, we think there is no worse example than Hypatia's death to describe the religious scene of Late Antique Egypt. The first reason is the religious attitude of the philosopher, quite different from that manifested by some of her colleagues, who seem pious pagans and firm advocates of the traditional Graeco-Roman worship in a particularly difficult moment. We barely know anything about her religious affiliation; nothing can be guessed beyond her pagan devotion, inferred from both her teaching commitment and the hostility towards her of Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria. There are no anecdotes—or, at least, they have not been kept—revealing a particularly active pagan behaviour—she taught philosophy both to her pagan and Christian disciples, who would later

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<sup>1</sup> Voltaire 1769; *Id.* 1835, 700-701; *Id.* 1961, 1104, 1108.

hold prestigious positions within the Church, such as Synesios, Bishop of Cyrene. Besides, she was not actively involved in the defence of paganism, as some other members of her own intellectual circle did—she was not a pagan who acted as an engaged devotee of Greek worships. Neither was she directly involved, nor encouraged her students to take part, in the incidents that eventually led to the destruction of the Alexandrian *Sarapeum* in 391 A.D.<sup>2</sup>. In fact, some of her colleagues participated in them, and they even boasted about killing Christians with their own hands. Later, they chose to leave the town in order to move to Athens. Finally, it is worth recalling that, even though she was a pagan, she had a very good relationship with Christian political circles—the Imperial Prefect himself, who lived in Alexandria—and former disciples who held influential positions in the imperial administration<sup>3</sup>.

When reconstructing the religious landscape Late Antique Egypt, it is thus necessary to address the murder of Hypatia from a wider perspective, and explain it maybe as political confrontation rather than as religious competition. Although Christian sources insist on presenting the defence of religious orthodoxy as a reason, her death was the tragic result of the political struggle between the Prefect and the Patriarch—maximum Christian exponents of civil and ecclesiastical power in the city—in a period when the Church was having more and more influence in secular affairs. According to Socrates the Scholastic, Hypatia was a victim of political jealousy, and her death was the final act in the struggle between civil and religious power, a necessary condition to remove all barriers hindering a future—even forced—reconciliation between Cyril and Orestes, after the attack suffered by the Prefect. Orestes was seeking the Patriarch's isolation. To achieve this goal, he needed the collaboration of both the pagan aristocracy and those Christians who were against the violent behaviour of the bishop, in order to create a pressure group contrary to Cyril. Hypatia seemed an appropriate mediator, a mediator between the driving forces of the Alexandrian society, due to all the circumstances above mentioned. Since the philosopher had played a key role, the goal of her murder was not the disappearance of a symbol of

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<sup>2</sup> Martínez Maza 2009, 293-313. Watts 2005a, 5-17; *Syn. epist.* 81; *Lib. epist.* 56, 83, 105, 110, 267, 228, 394, etc.; *Syn. epist.*, 145; *Fl. Taurus Seleucus Cyrus: PLRE II*, s.v.: *Cyrus*; *Herculianus*: *Syn. epist.*, 146; *Olimpius*: *Syn. epist.* 98 et 99; *Hesychius: PLRE II*, s.v. : *Hesychius* 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Syn. de prov.*; Cameron and Long 1993, 122-124; 200-207. *Simplicius, comes et magister utriusque militiae per Orientem et magister militum praesentalis*: *Syn. epist.* 24 ; 28. *PLRE II*, s.v. : *Simplicius* 2.



paganism. Instead, the main aim was to eliminate the flagship of this new alliance among pagans, Jews and Christians against the Patriarch.

In my opinion, a proof of the fact that religious struggle was not as an underlying reason for the murder is that pagans and Christians had a fruitful coexistence for more than a century after Hypatia's death, in the same pedagogical environment where she carried out her activity: the Philosophical School of Alexandria. Indeed, when the closure of the Athenian Academy was ordered<sup>4</sup>, the Alexandrian school remained open and was managed by the pagan Ammonios assisted by the Christian John Philoponos (Saffrey, 1954, 396-410).

We consider that the tendency to standardise the Egyptian religious landscape impoverishes our view on the issue. Instead of presenting any religious scenario from Hypatia's death onwards, it is much more interesting to pay attention to the complexity of the conflict between pagan and Christian communities in Late Antique Egypt—and realise, for instance, how different the nature of the religious situation in larger capitals is with respect to the peripheral environment.

In Alexandria, it is possible to point out that aggressions to pagans were just anecdotic—even though they became quite widespread, they did not lead into excessively violent protests from the victims, especially if we compare them to either those observed in rural areas, where pagans actively defended their sacred spaces, or to the fierce resistance of Christian groups (Arians and Niceans) against the Government's attempts to force religious uniformity. Actually, the violence or claim for violence normally comes from Christians—above all, from urban Christian crowds and, in many occasions, it is targeted against Christians themselves. In any case, in the capital it was not usual for pagans to individually respond to the attack, they rather used to do it in collusion with other victims, Jews or Christians from an oppressed group.

On the other hand, in Alexandria, the bishop was responsible for the iconoclast intervention, which was not indiscriminately targeted against any expression of pagan belief. The combat was seeking an easy replacement of the official religion—therefore, the main goals were the Graeco-Roman divinities of the Pantheon, including the appropriate variations in order to adapt them to the Egyptian reality<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, in this urban environment, particularly in one of the main capitals in the

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<sup>4</sup> Under Justinian: *CI*, I,11,10,2. 529 A.D.

<sup>5</sup> Rees 1950, 86-100; Tran Tam Tinh 1986, 360-361; Dunand 1979,140-161; Frankfurter 1998a, 32-33.

Empire as Alexandria was, the Patriarch could only expect an strict application of the law and, consequently, the penalty established for outlawed practices, such as the entrance into temples for ritual slaughters. The bishop's behaviour should be characterised as good judgement because, when facing an abusive intervention, the pagan *bouletai*—who were still powerful enough to have influence on the Emperor and his environment—could react by asking the civil administration's intervention, which was in fact the case after the siege of the Alexandrian *Sarapeum* (Martínez Maza 2002, 133-152). However, at his own discretion—that is, without the support of any imperial directive—the bishop took all votive offerings, worship furniture, and decorative elements from the shrines. This action did not have any legal support until after the Hypatia's death.

The persistence of paganism in rural areas, however, is quite different, and could even be defined as paradoxical. On the one hand, compared to ecclesiastical caution, effective and unavoidable in the great centres of power, it is supposed that distance and isolation from those pagan communities located in marginal areas would make their survival easier. Actually, some of them remained even till the 6<sup>th</sup> century, protected thanks to their particular geographical location. Hence some groups in the area close to Lake Mareotis, near Alexandria —which were only occasionally in touch with their immediate surroundings — kept their pagan affiliation till their inhabitants were Christianised by bishop John the Almoner at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Yet this distance and isolation made the pagans vulnerable and put them in a position of disadvantage in comparison with their co-followers in large cities, where any violent action beyond the legal limits could lead to immediate social and administrative reactions—something that actually happened. In the Egyptian countryside, the situation was quite different, and paganism did not survive in better conditions because it benefitted from an environment away from large centres of ideological discussion. The first reason is that the threat against paganism had a different nature and source. The intervention of the monks—agents of Christianisation in these rural areas— was responsible for the violence of the confrontation, as the followers of traditional religion felt forced to preserve their belief against these fanatics who acted with complete impunity, benefitting from the isolation of these communities and the tacit support of the ecclesiastical authorities<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Frankfurter 2008, 135-154; Saradi 2008, 113-125.

However, a common pattern can be appreciated in imperial intervention both in big cities and in peripheral areas, characterised by an ambiguous position adopted by civil authorities in the religious conflict. In fact, imperial legislation (COD.THEOD. 16.10.15; 16.10.23) is not able to eradicate paganism —officials do not strictly monitor law enforcement and do not start any anti-pagan intervention, unlike the ecclesiastical authority, the real promoter of the iconoclastic action. Certainly, monks made pressure in the countryside, whereas in the capitals they had the protection and consent of bishops, who also put pressure on the imperial administration to enact tougher laws or, at least, assure strict law enforcement.

This attitude shown by the administration is, in my view, necessarily ambiguous because imperial law had to defend the principles of Christian orthodoxy, now the official religion of the empire. Hence, provincial governors and local government officials had to defend—at least in formal terms—and therefore tolerate, however excessive they were, the Christianising interventions of the most charismatic leaders i.e. the bishops in the urban environment, and the monks in rural areas<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, it could be explained that court decisions on the attacks of temples were certainly very similar in all cases, and away from the severity imposed by the letter of the law, even though the monks who were responsible for these incidents were brought to justice, due to the fact that these areas were protected by legislation. And so Shenoute goes unpunished for all the processes he is involved. Furthermore, after being acquitted for his attack against the temple of Pan-Min in Panopolis, just on the bank opposite his monastery, he turned up as a free man, with a little feeling of joy, in front of the Christian crowd gathered near the *officium* of the *dux* to cheer their hero. And in front of this audience, with the intention of making his actions more influential, he delivered a violent sermon threatening the idolaters and tried to convince the crowd with a description of the circumstances of the attack, aiming at justifying his intervention, and also showing the ineffectiveness of traditional devotions<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, civil authorities allowed pagan practices everyday, even though the main rituals were, as we mentioned above, proscribed by law, and that sacrifice—the backbone of all ritual activity—was punished with death<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, judges permitted the development of outlaw worship,

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<sup>7</sup> Fowden 1978, 53-78; Macmullen 1984, 86-101; Holum 1996, 131-150.

<sup>8</sup> *Sinuthii archimandritae vita*, 85-86.

<sup>9</sup> COD. THEOD. 9.16.7; 16.10.6; 16-10-23.

tolerated pagan active resistance, and not only did they authorise this attitude, but they even punished any attack against traditional belief. In my view, the complaisance shown by imperial administration to pagans may have a number of reasons. In this area, especially in regions such as the Thebaid, there may have been a great number of villages with pagan population, as it can be inferred from contemporary testimonies. For instance, the statue toppled by Shenoute in the agora of Panopolis is a clear evidence of the strength of paganism in the area, since it remained there, as a sacred image, in the most important public place of the city<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, most peasants remained faithful to the pagan devotion their landlords kept professing—consequently, part of the strategy followed by the Christianising agents to attract the dependants towards Christianity, was, first, to complain about the abuses of the *potentes*<sup>11</sup>. As an illustration, Shenoute, in one of the letters addressed to one of the *potentes* in the area, Kronos, characterises his oppressive attitude as that of the Pharaoh in the Old Testament. The abbot also presents the spiritual and material benefits of Christian patronage, and these are presented to the peasants as an effective replacement<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, the social and economic exploitation denounced by Shenoute in his sermons and letters<sup>13</sup> shows that religious controversy in rural areas had different features to the more philosophical strategies developed by Alexandrian opponents<sup>14</sup>.

Pagans also formed a group with significant qualitative weight in all the communities. Pagan landowners had kept a considerable influence on provincial administration, regardless of which religious affiliation imperial officials professed<sup>15</sup>. These *potentes*' support was essential to ensure the maintenance of law, tax collection, and supply of grain to capital cities,

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<sup>10</sup> *CSCO* 445 1982, 41-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Let your eyes*, fr. 1.9-10 trad. Emmel 2008a and 2008b; Besa, *Vita Sinuthii*, 83-84; *Sinuthii Archimandritae vita*, 23-24; Hickey 2007, 288-308; Palme 2007, 263.

<sup>12</sup> Brown 1971b, 80-101; Garnsey and Woolf 1989, 167-168; Trombley 1994, 214-219; Wipszycka 1997, 250; *ead.* 1998, 74-80; Martin 1998, 63-66; Frankfurter 1998b, 77-81; Martínez Maza 2012b, 268-270.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron 1991, 89-19; Papaconstantinou 2001, 244-245; Bagnall 2008, 26-28.

<sup>14</sup> Tuilier 1982, 738-742; Blumenthal 1993, 307-325; Penella 1993, 115-117; Van den Hoek 1997, 59-87; Clarke 2005, 605-608; Cameron 2007, 21-33.

<sup>15</sup> Jones 1964, 724-731; Geremek 1990, 47-54; Liebeschuetz 1996, 389-408; Banaji 2001, 116-117.

including Constantinople<sup>16</sup>. The role of these major landowners as local patrons of traditional religion<sup>17</sup> further explains the fact that they became the target of iconoclastic attacks promoted by the monks, as well as those suffered—not only verbal but also physical—which culminated in raids even in their own houses, in search of idols.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the civil administration addresses claims brought by pagans after the attacks suffered on their temples. If pagans had not been really numerous and their influence had been more limited, the claims brought against the monks would have had no chance of being admitted<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, if population were fully Christian, the magistrate, even if he was pagan, would not have dared to prosecute the defenders of the true faith. The proceedings against monks confirm that the weight of paganism in rural areas was still as decisive as to keep, at least, a formal appearance of disapproval of the interventions the Christian hero made in the area.

In short, for the sake of social, economic and institutional stability, a certain compromise was much less controversial, not only on the part of the central administrative bodies, but also—and with greater justification—of those involved in municipal affairs since, given the weight and influence of pagan communities, their removal involved a serious conflict that officials preferred to avoid.

Since then, both monks and bishops criticised imperial complaisance towards traditional practices. So does Shenoute during the judicial process he undergoes after his attack on the temple of Kronos-Petbe<sup>19</sup>. On this occasion, the abbot stated that the legal claim against him and his accomplices was the result of bribes accepted by Theodosios, the judge on duty<sup>20</sup>. A similar accusation appears in the panegyric to bishop Makarios, where Christians criticise administrative tolerance which he thought was consequence of the riches received from pagans.

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<sup>16</sup> Shenute, *De idolis Pneuieit* II, 50; Lewis Lewis 1997, 107-113; Harries 1999, 170; Bowman 2005, 322-323; Van Minnen 2007, 219-223; Martínez Maza 2010, 163-165.

<sup>17</sup> Maspero 1914, 163-195; Rémondon 1952, 64-67; Chuvin 1986, 387-396; Wipszycka 1988, 158-164; Bowersock 1990, 60-61; Brown 1992, 35-41; Frankfurter 1994, 189-221; *id.* 1998, chap. 6.3, 248-256.

<sup>18</sup> Martínez Maza 2012b, 270-272.

<sup>19</sup> *Sinuthii Archimandritae vita*, 86; Aufrère 2005, vol. 3, 77-93.

<sup>20</sup> *Const. Sirmordianae* 14; Borkowski 1990, 25-30; Harries 1999, 153-158; Martínez Maza 2010, 162-165.

In any case, these processes are consistent with the imperial attitude observed in the protection granted by court of Constantinople to non-Christians, as well as with the lack of severity in anti-pagan law enforcement. A law enacted in 423 by Theodosios II establishes a policy of relative tolerance towards these communities, provided they showed restraint in their religious behaviour and kept a low-profile public display of their beliefs<sup>21</sup>. Christians should not use violence against those Jews and pagans who live peacefully—otherwise, they will have to restore expropriated properties and return three or four times the value of the stolen goods.

However, despite the complaisance shown by political authorities, in peripheral areas, undeniable physical confrontations are detected between pagans and Christians, and they leave their mark on literary sources.

Obviously, these stories have to be treated with caution. It is true that they respond in structure—as well as in topics and the description of events—to a literary archetype of the genre they belong to: hagiography<sup>22</sup>. Both the decisive intervention of the monk, the only protagonist of the action, and the cruelty of his pagan opponent are exaggerated in order to make the confrontation more dramatic and terrible, and the Christian intervention look more heroic. The conversion pattern also responds to a model reproduced—almost automatically—in every story describing the evangelisation of the area<sup>23</sup>. This model is more concerned with highlighting the role of the monk than with gathering all the features and names of the attacked deities in a true and complete manner, or the details of the beliefs in struggle, barely outlined with attributes intended only to stress the atrocity of paganism and, consequently, the courage of the Christian agent<sup>24</sup>. The best example of reproduction of this paradigm is the recurring description of the monks' performance, justified in the Christian

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<sup>21</sup> COD. THEOD. 16.10.24.1: “We especially command those persons who are truly Christians or who are said to be, that they shall not abuse the authority of religion and dare to lay violent hands on Jews and pagans who are living quietly and attempting nothing disorderly or contrary to law. For if such Christians should be violent against persons living in security or should be violent against persons living in security or should plunder their goods, they shall be compelled to restore triple or quadruple that amount which they robbed”.

<sup>22</sup> *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 324-40; Rapp 2006, 98-100; Bagnall 2008, 275-98. The account could be a complete fiction, for example, the elimination of the holy falcon of Philae.

<sup>23</sup> Brakke 2006, 222-223; *id.* 2008, 108-109; Frankfurter 2006, 13-37.

<sup>24</sup> Van Minnen 2006, 75-91; Emmel 2008a; Van der Vliet 2008, 39-55.

literature of the time as a sacred fight focused on the purpose of purifying the rural areas with the presence of Christ. Therefore, we cannot consider these sources as absolutely reliable evidence to reconstruct the religious landscape in Egypt<sup>25</sup>. Nonetheless, if we remove all the embellishments of the genre, it is not possible to ignore the reality they disclose: the recurring confrontation between communities with different beliefs, violence as the normal behavioural pattern among monks, and the resistance of the pagan population.

The strategy followed by monks, who presented themselves as the real guarantors of true faith in rural areas, involves several events that allow us to see how different the religious situation of the peripheral regions was in comparison to that observed in the centres of power, such as Alexandria—cities where coexistence, even when forced, was more frequent as a pattern of behaviour than religious intolerance.

In rural areas, monks first proceeded to the desacralisation of temples and the images they housed. This phenomenon was detected in all Upper Egypt systematically so as to destroy the power of the divinities. Nevertheless, the “destruction” of temples does not entail a complete demolition, but only the transfer or the storage of the statues, altars, and other ornaments, as well as the closure of the temple itself, with the aim of preventing the performance of any ritual activity. Moreover, on some occasions, this destruction only manifests itself in verbal acts of neutralisation: simulations are invoked as mere pieces of wood, clay or stone, and traditional prayers are formulated to curse and disown the pagan images<sup>26</sup>.

At other times, extreme actions are taken, such as the public burning of cultic images, in the same way as those perpetrated by Shenoute in Atripe<sup>27</sup>, in Hermopolis, like the decapitation of the falcon at Philae<sup>28</sup>.

Afterwards, the cross is erected in these temples for the sake of expiation. This practice allowed many places to remain intact, since it was enough to remove cultic objects from the inside and then close the temple for it to stay desecrated.

The most radical intervention in rural areas, including the demolition of sacred space, has traditionally served to show that violence was the

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<sup>25</sup> Cautionary remarks about the hagiographical evidence were expressed by Dijkstra 2011, 394-409.

<sup>26</sup> So does Shenoute in several speeches.

<sup>27</sup> Shenoute’s works in *CSCO* 42, 91; Behlmer 1996, 113-114; Shenoute, *Let Our Eyes*, fr. 2.10-11, Emmel trad. 2008.

<sup>28</sup> *Life of Aaron*, ed. Budge, 446; Dijkstra 2007, 191-197; *ead.* 2008, 267-268.

usual practice for Christianisation, but this practice is not that common<sup>29</sup>, since it is hardly ever reflected in archaeological documentation, and lies well away from legal regulations. The truth is that it cannot be said that monks had complete freedom of action to destroy temples and scare the pagans with impunity. In fact, as a secular group, they did not enjoy the privileges of the clergy and could be severely punished.

However, there is an explanation that integrates these two seemingly contradictory realities —i.e., the iconoclastic violence promoted by monks and the much less severe indications contained in anti-pagan legislation. To this end, it must be considered that we are not aware of the degree of knowledge rural populations had about the measures enacted in Constantinople. The missionaries' behaviour does not need to be solely explained as a result of applying *escripts* and edicts verbatim. It may be a disproportionate response by local religious centres located in peripheral areas to the news of confrontations of pagans and Christians in the capital<sup>30</sup>, or it can be the result of a radical interpretation of the principles promulgated by a self-proclaimed Christian government. Thus, monks were able to act with excessive enthusiasm, perhaps because they knew in detail the specific conditions granted in legislation. In short, their iconoclastic attitude could respond to the way law was perceived in the periphery, or perhaps monks interpreted the legal measures *in extremis* to justify violence against their religious opponents.

At first, pagans responded actively to Christian violence and, they defended their temples. We can observe some examples of these actions in defence of traditional institutions. For instance, there is a papyrus containing the complaint of a man charged with guarding a temple at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Theadelphia (Fayum), after the city had been abandoned. His presence points out some kind of administrative responsibility or liturgy, but at the same time it shows the concern to preserve the continuity of the sanctuaries. The individual felt sorry because there was “no official representative or any kind of security to keep them with me.”

We can find some evidences of the active defence pagans made in accounts about the anti-pagan campaigns of monks in the main towns of the Upper Nile, which allow us to realise the attitude of both religious contenders, as well as the aggressive nature of the confrontation.

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<sup>29</sup> Monk as responsible for the violence against temples: Frankfurter 1998b, 283; *id.* 2008, 135-155; Sauer 2003, 89-101.

<sup>30</sup> *Sarapeum's* demolition inspired Shenoute: Emmel 2002, 112-113.



At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Makedonios intervenes in the region of Philae<sup>31</sup>. His story is interesting, as it allows us to confirm the persistence—together with Isiac cult, the most popular in the area—of other local faiths, such as the devotion to Horus, really widespread among the population of southern Egypt around the first cataract, also worshipped by marginal populations, such as the Blemmyes tribes<sup>32</sup>.

The permanence of a sanctuary devoted to Isis was an isolated case within the progressive decline of official cults, and it was probably due to the patronage of the Alexandrian *bouletai* that it was preserved as a centre of pilgrimage. A similar situation can be observed in relation to the sanctuary of Isis at Menouthis. It remained open until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup>. However, there were other regional sacred spaces—devoted to minor divinities—which not only stayed undamaged, but were even more relevant. Their survival seemed easier, in the first place, because they needed fewer infrastructures, but also because these local divinities took care of those issues related to daily life and the domestic environment<sup>34</sup>. In fact, their presence has been detected both in sacred spaces and in private environments—a presence which should not be strange, given the protection they provided to households. For instance, representations of these gods have been preserved in the form of small terracotta figures, or dressing the walls of the houses. Many of these deities kept their indigenous appearance, because they were not fully integrated into the Graeco-Roman pantheon. Perhaps this is the reason why they better survive the Christian replacement, since they posed little competition for the rise of Christianity as the new official religion.

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<sup>31</sup> *Life of Aaron*, Budge ed., 445-56; also, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius by Paphnutius*, CSS, Kalamazoo 1993, 31.

<sup>32</sup> Zabkar 1975, 150-153; Frankfurter 1998b, 110; Dijkstra 2002, 7-10; *ead.* 2005, 78-80; *ead.* 2008, 253-269.

<sup>33</sup> The Isis temple at Menouthis was destroyed at the instigation of bishop Peter Mongos of Alexandria 480-488: Zach. Myt.V. Sev., PO, 14-44; Vidman 1969, n° 403, 556 a, 406; Trombley 1994, 220-221; Watts 2005b, 436-464. The *Sarapeum* at Canopus, close to Menouthis, was one of the most popular centre of cures by incubation: Sauneron 1959, 50-53; Wipszycka 1988, 137-139. The Isis Temple at Philae: Dijkstra 2004, 137-54; For a detailed discussion: Bonneau 1964, 388, 487-495; Bernand 1969, II, n° 239-245; Bagnall 1993, 264-265; Frankfurter 1998b, 166-167; Dijkstra 2011, 421-430.

<sup>34</sup> J. Quaegebeur *et al.* 1985, 217-232; Whitethorne 1985, 3080-82; Martínez Maza 2012a, 198-200.

Consequently, the anti-pagan campaign which started in monastic centres is not oriented towards places where deities of the Graeco-Roman pantheon had been assimilated to the Egyptian one—as we pointed out above, these temples were ceasing to be used—but to those dedicated to popular, traditional deities.

This is the case of Petbe-Kronos, to whom libations in the irrigation channels were offered, as he cared for the correct development of the agricultural cycle<sup>35</sup>. His temple in Panopolis was destroyed by Shenoute, who also put an end to simulations of Pan-Min in Pleuit<sup>36</sup>. This deity was the guarantor of the river flood, essential for the survival of the entire Egyptian population<sup>37</sup>. In Abydos, the god Bes suffered the iconoclastic actions of Moses<sup>38</sup>. In the Thebaid, we hear about other Egyptian divinities in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries—this is the case of Kothos, an unknown deity whose temple was destroyed by bishop Makarios of Tkôv (Antaioupolis)<sup>39</sup>. In short, the attack is not indiscriminately made against any pagan manifestation, but it is targeted to the main local pagan deities that remain alive in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, as they protect the daily activities of rural Egyptian population<sup>40</sup>.

The panegyric of Makarios, bishop of Tkôv (Antaioupolis), is the most vivid description of the way the *helenes* made their temples. The story also reveals the existence of a large group of pagans from the town who helped priests and actively opposed the Christianising intervention of the Christian hero. The story presents, in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, the bishop listening to priest complaints in a town belonging to his diocese. There, idolaters practiced human sacrifices with the aim of honouring Kothos, a local deity. According to the narration provided by the Christian delegation coming to the bishop, the cruelty of the pagans had reached the point that they were even capable of kidnapping Christian children, sacrificing them to Kothos, and using their intestines to make strings for their harps (another version states that this music made hidden treasures

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<sup>35</sup> *Sinuthii archimandritae vita*, 45; Trombley 1994, 216; Frankfurter 1998b, 57-58.

<sup>36</sup> *CSCO* 42, 91; *Life of Shenoute*, 84 *CSCO* 41, 41.

<sup>37</sup> Bonneau 1964, 398-401; Frankfurter 1998a, 43-46.

<sup>38</sup> Gauthier 1903, 165-181; Michailidis 1960/62, 65-85; *id.* 1963/64, 53-93; Meeks 1992, 423-436; Dunand 1997, 65-84; Min: Rondot 1998, 241-254.

<sup>39</sup> Not before the early 6<sup>th</sup> A.C. *A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkow, Attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria*, D. W. Johnson, (ed.), *CSCO* 416, 1980, vol. I.29-31; vol. II: 21-24.

<sup>40</sup> Borkowski 1990, 25-30; Saradi-Mendelovici 1990, 56-58; Robins 1993, 84-85; Martínez Maza 2012a, 171-210.

come to light). Makarios decides to intervene and, followed by two brothers (four, according to another version), goes to the sanctuary. When he is already at the *temenos*, he stops in front of the temple. Kothos, in a statue inside the temple, strongly protests against the presence of the bishop, and threatens to leave his home if the bishop stays in the sacred space. The *helenes* act accordingly and a group of twenty pagans, holding rakes, force him to leave the space, while their wives and children, who had stepped onto the roof, throw stones to prevent him from entering. Makarios ignores the aggression and enters the temple, where he is captured—together with his companions—to be sacrificed. The incident would have had a tragic end for all of them if Besa, then the abbot of the White Monastery, had not come to their aid with fourteen monks. The bishop and the monks leave the temple, which is destroyed by a miraculous fire. Soon after, on their way back, one of the priests—Homer—is caught and burned alive, along with the idols he carried. The Christians begin to chase and attack the pagans, remove the statues of their deities from their houses, and—as it has happened on similar occasions—commit plundering and other violent acts. The narration shows the baptism of some pagans as the immediate consequence. The description ends with an incredibly dramatic comment: the Christians move to those homes that had been abandoned by the pagans.

Another main figure in the Christianisation of the rural areas in Upper Egypt was Moses, whom Shenoute had described as largely responsible for the conversion of idolaters and the destruction of temples. The intensity of his involvement in the region of Abydos allows us to realise that paganism still maintained its vitality in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41</sup>.

According to the sources, Moses had to deal with a demon named “Bes”, easily recognisable thanks to his distinctive iconography, an ugly dwarf god, with a bloated belly and a mocking face. Nevertheless, despite this repulsive physical appearance, children and pregnant women were under his protection<sup>42</sup>. We know about the popularity of Bes in the 4<sup>th</sup> century thanks to Ammianus Marcellinus, who describes oracular consultations that used to take place in his temple<sup>43</sup>. Moses’ intervention targeted the Memnonion of Abydos, an Osirian cult centre specialised in

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<sup>41</sup> After ca. 550 A.C. *Life of Moses*, Amélinau (ed.), vol. 2, 682; Coquin 1986, 1-14.

<sup>42</sup> Robins 1993, 88-87; Mysliwiec 1998, 140-141; Martínez Maza 2012a, 179-181.

<sup>43</sup> Frankfurter 1998a, 38-42.

oracular predictions. As Ammianus had already indicated, such competence was now exercised by this god, deeply rooted in traditional religion<sup>44</sup>. Archaeological sources also confirm the popularity of these consultations because, while the reliefs of the goddess and other deities remained intact in the temple dedicated to Hathor (Dendara), most heads of Bes were systematically mutilated, suggesting that the Christians recognised his power and influence among local people.

The passage by Moses shows that the deity continued to exert its apotropaic function well into the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Moses, leading a group of monks, initiates an assault on the temples in a town near Abydos, defended by their followers. After the first earthquake, which forced the devotees to take shelter in their homes, thirty priests (23 from the Weeb class and 7 from the Hout class) regained strength in the temple of Apollo. The priests, trusting in the help of their gods, remained in the place but, due a second earthquake, they died under the ruins of the temple. A third earthquake would cause the destruction of four more temples. The children of the deceased and other pagans were eventually baptised by the bishop of the region. The specific terms to name the priests show that, even in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, there are still traces of the ancient priestly organisation.

This was not the only intervention of Moses against pagans. At the request of some villagers, and accompanied by seven monks, he embarked on the hunt of a demon that had sheltered in the temple of Bes and caused illnesses and misfortunes among Christians. The narration does not offer accurate data about the way Bes manifests, but in any case it shows that pagans did not give up and kept on defending their temples.

Together with Moses, in the Upper Nile area, it is necessary to remember the anti-pagan campaign promoted by Shenoute of Atripe<sup>45</sup>, so successful—or at least so popular—that, after his death, the monks of the White Monastery followed his example and Besa (the new abbot and successor of Shenoute) felt forced to remind his brethren they should avoid the use of force in the monastery—instead, they had to get the conversion of pagans by means of the Word<sup>46</sup>.

Among the actions initiated by Shenoute, in order to end any kind of public manifestation of paganism, we must highlight again the burning of

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<sup>44</sup> AMM. *Hist.* XIX, 12.3.

<sup>45</sup> Emmel 2008a, 161- 181.

<sup>46</sup> Besa, *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, 1, 129 in K.H.Kuhn (ed.), *CSCO* 157.

the temple in Atripe<sup>47</sup>, of which the abbot was an accomplice, as well as the attack on the temple of Pan in Plewit where, accompanied by other monks, he entered the place and, according to a behaviour identifiable as a paradigm of Christianisation, he took the plundered objects to his monastery. In both cases, it is important to emphasise the role of provincial authorities responding to the request of justice by pagans. After the burning of the temple in Atripe, Antinopolis and Hermopolis magistrates imprisoned a large number of Christian fire-raisers, held over for trial at the request of the priests of the temple. In the case of the temple of Pan-Min, the priests came to the authorities of Antinoe, the provincial capital of the Thebaid, in order to achieve a fair punishment for the perpetrators<sup>48</sup>.

In these particular instances, sources reflect the violent pagan opposition to this, but this is an infrequent reaction. The most common—and less traumatic—response was resignation, and pagans preferred to perform worship in more remote areas instead of public spaces, so as to avoid any public exhibition which could provoke the wrath of the Christians. Indeed, archaeological documentation allows us to verify that religious practice moved to chapels within the residences of pagan notables. For this reason, it is not unusual to find descriptions of night raids to private residences of noble pagans in Christian literature of the time.

In any case, Christianising intervention in Egyptian rural areas was not, despite their radicalism, particularly effective, since Besa, successor of Shenoute, lamented the persistence of idolatrous practices among the locals, who were in dispute over a simple piece of wood<sup>49</sup>. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, his writings do not indicate the conversion of the Egyptian rural areas, not even possibly aiming at producing propagandistic texts, as was the case of the works of Rufinus of Aquileia, which reflect the largest narrative of the destruction of the Serapeum of Alexandria, so as to exhibit the fast and happy defeat of paganism, or the stories that collect Shenoute's intervention in his relentless pursuit of new believers.

In short, despite the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Hypatia in 415, the murder of the philosopher is not an essential milestone in the triumph of the Church, not even in Egypt. The complexity and slowness of the process that led to the universal extension of Christianity

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<sup>47</sup> Leipoldt, vol. I 1906-13, vol. III, 91; Behlmer 1996, 92; Emmel 2002, 95-113.

<sup>48</sup> Martínez Maza 2012b, 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 8.25; Besa, frag. 41 (“To the Dignitaries and people of the Village”) in K.H. Kuhn (ed.), *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, (CSCO 157 vol. I, Louvain, 1956, 129-130; Frankfurter 2000, 273-295.

is revealed in a much richer outlook as long as we consider the heterogeneous situation of paganism in Egypt.

# THE PORTRAIT OF SELEUKEIA IN THE MIRACLES OF SAINT THEKLA

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## 1. Introduction

The *Life and Miracles of Saint Thekla* (*LM*) was written in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century by a priest of Seleukeia on the Calycadnus, responsible of the shrine dedicated to the saint placed nearby the city<sup>2</sup>. This hagiographical text is composed by two parts in which we can find, first of all, the *Life*, a paraphrase of the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* (*APTh*)<sup>3</sup>, and the *Miracles*, a collection of the prodigious interventions of Thekla in her sanctuary.

The literary context in which the *LM* appears was clearly dominated by the new biographies of saints, a tradition related to the culture of the monasteries built at this time in all the Mediterranean territories, especially in the East<sup>4</sup>. Greek was not only the language of Classical culture or that of the New Testament, but also that of monastic culture<sup>5</sup>. In fact, with the spread of the ascetic way of life the figures portrayed by the hagiographical texts started to change. At the beginning, until the adoption of the Christian faith made by the Empire, the first saints were the apostles and the martyrs. Then, the situation changed (during the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century) and the tolerance of Christian practices forced hagiographers to look for new models of saints (bishops, ascetics, monks, virgins), who had different

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my dear friend Christian Enrique García for having read and checked this article before its publication. He helped me enormously with his advice about English grammar.

<sup>2</sup> Dagron 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson 2006b, 67-112.

<sup>4</sup> Impellizzeri 1993, 284-285.

<sup>5</sup> Rapp 2004, 1248-1251.

powers and undertook several social duties inside the communities in which they were venerated<sup>6</sup>.

However, Thekla was not a new saint from this period. Her story comes from apostolic legends, and even she was called *πρωτομάρτυς* at this time due to her antiquity<sup>7</sup>. In fact, she had been the disciple of Paul in Ikonion and his companion in Antioch in the *APTh* – a text in which she suffered two different martyrdoms – and her story was very well-known in Christian milieus of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>8</sup>.

At the end of the *APTh* she is said to have travelled to Seleukeia to carry on her evangelisation and, also, to die. Later, some additions were incorporated to the original texts of the *APTh* in which her stay in Seleukeia and her death were largely explained. These new legends about the final episodes of her life seem to have stimulated the spread of her cult in Seleukeia. We do not know exactly when her shrine was built, but we can assert that her popularity had already reached a high level during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when Gregory of Nazianzos or the pilgrim Egeria visited it and stayed there for a while<sup>9</sup>.

The *LM* shows the peak of popularity of this shrine and describes the life in the city of Seleukeia through the miracles made by Thekla. In the first part of the text the anonymous hagiographer rewrites the *APTh* expanding the dialogues of the characters and widening the narrative action. Johnson has observed the influence of the ancient novel in this paraphrase<sup>10</sup>, but it is also true that the main structure of the story does not change. From the original text the author only omits the initial scene in which Onesiphoros was waiting with his family for Paul, who was on the way from Listra, and the subsequent description of Paul, which often related to the physiognomy<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, despite the respect for the essence of the story, it is really difficult to find literal passages, or even with minimum changes, borrowed from *APTh*. In fact, we have only detected four, all of them within the dialogues of the heroine. The scenes

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<sup>6</sup> Brown 1971b, 80-101.

<sup>7</sup> Sev. Gab. *De caeco nato* 59.

<sup>8</sup> Holzhey 1905; Aubineau 1975, 356-362; Hayne 1994, 209-218; Pesthy 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory of Nazianzos talks about his stay at the shrine of Thekla in his *Carmina de vita sua* (545-551). Egeria made a pilgrimage visiting the saint places of Christianity in the second half of the 4th century. She describes the sanctuary of Seleukeia in her *Itinerarium* (22-23).

<sup>10</sup> Johnson 2006c, 199-203.

<sup>11</sup> Grant 1982, 1-4; Omerzu 2008, 252-279; Barbaglio 1985, 62-64; Malherbe 1986, 170-175; Bollok 1996, 6-15.



in which we can read these passages are Thekla's request for the seal of Christ (*APTh* 25 - *Vita* 14, 32-33: μόνον δός μοι τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγίδα), her warning to Alexander during their struggle (*APTh* 26 - *Vita* 15, 54-55: Μὴ βιάζου τοίνυν τὴν ξένην, μὴ βιάζου τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ δούλην), her preaching before her auto-baptism in the pool of seals (*APTh* 34 - *Vita* 20, 31-32: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι σου, Κύριε, ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρα βαπτίζομαι) and her long final intervention before the governor (*APTh* 37 - *Vita* 22, 69-73).

Furthermore, to the end of the *Life*, precisely in chapter 27, 27-49, one can find the first description of Seleukeia provided by the hagiographer. First of all, he describes accurately her location starting with the formula πόλις δέ ἐστιν αὕτη, one that was very popular among Christian historians of the time<sup>12</sup>. Next, the author places Seleukeia at the beginning of the Orient borderlands (τῶν μὲν τῆς Ἑώας ὀρίων ἐν προουμίῳ κειμένη), remembers its status as the main city of the region of Isauria (προκαθεζομένη πάσης Ἰσαυρίδος πόλεως) and mentions the river Calycadnos, crossing the city from north to south until its mouth in the Mediterranean sea. As the author asserts, the sea separates Seleukeia from Cyprus (τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἕω καὶ μεσημβρίαν παρατεταμένης ἡμῖν καὶ ἡμᾶς καὶ Κυπρίου διοριζούσης).

Secondly, he describes the essence of the city, underlining its charm and its symmetry and comparing it with Tarsus, located not so far. The hagiographer indicates the rivalry between both cities on several aspects but finally, though at only one point, admits the superiority of Tarsus: it was the city in which the apostle Paul was born.

οὕτω δὲ λαμπρὰ καὶ ἐπίχαρις, ὡς τὰς μὲν ὑπερβάλλειν τὰς πλειούς, ταῖς δὲ καὶ παρισούσθαι, Ταρσῶ δὲ τῇ καλῇ καὶ ἀμιλλᾶσθαι, ὄρων τε ἔνεκα καὶ θέσεως, καὶ ἀέρων εὐκρασίας, καὶ καρπῶν ἀφθονίας, καὶ ὀνίων δαψιλείας, καὶ ὑδάτων εὐχρηστίας, καὶ λουτρῶν χάριτος, καὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει λαμπρότητος, καὶ μουσῶν εὐπειίας, καὶ δήμου φαιδρότητος, καὶ ῥητόρων εὐροίας, καὶ τῶν ἐν στρατηγικαῖς ζῶναις εὐκλείας, ἐν ἐνὶ δὲ μόνῳ τῆς ἄγαν ἀντιφιλοτιμήσεως ὑφιεῖσα καὶ ἡρέμα πῶς ὑποκατακλινομένη καὶ τοῦ πρωτεύειν αὐτῇ παραχωροῦσα, τῷ πατρίδα καὶ πόλιν εἶναι τοῦ μεγάλου Παύλου, ἀφ' οὗπερ μάλιστα καὶ ἡμῖν τὸ ἔχειν ὑπῆρξεν τὴν ἁγίαν παρθένον. (*Vita* 27, 39-49)

<sup>12</sup> Socrates of Constantinople (*HE* II 18, 36; II 20, 12; II 20, 29; II 36, 11; III 5, 5; III 10, 2; VI 11, 5; VII 18, 37; VII 23, 6), Theodoret of Cyrrihus (*HE* 99, 10; 128, 14; 157, 6; 183, 13; *HR* II 21, 3; III 20, 3; VIII 1; 14; XXVII 5, 3; XXVIII 1, 5; *Com. in Is.* 6, 289; 11, 202; PG 80, 1752, 40; 81, 700, 40; 82, 593, 6), Sozomenos (*HE* III 11, 4, 1; VI 1, 5, 2; VI 24, 8, 3), Priscus (*Fr.* 1b, 1; 2, 17) or Zosimos (*HN* II 18, 2, 2; III 36, 2, 5).

This first description of Seleukeia already indicates some of the social groups featured in the miracles such as the rhetoricians or the soldiers. Anyway, the authentic portrait of the city must be discovered in the *Miracles*, where Thekla will assist a wide range of individuals from both Seleukeia and its environs. Following Millar, the *Miracles* can be considered as the best contemporary example of how the city was perceived as a collective institution profiting from the benefits and the protection granted by a saint<sup>13</sup>.

In the shrine of Thekla people performed the *incubatio*, a practice inherited from Hellenistic times, extremely popular in the temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus and still present in many Christian temples<sup>14</sup>, in which a sick person came into a sanctuary to sleep and during the night received in a dream the visit of a saint prescribing him the remedy of the illness<sup>15</sup>.

The 46 miracles of Thekla are very varied and may be classified in different groups according to their main motif. Despite this first thematic classification in the next pages we will distinguish two categories of miracles, the collective and the individual, to analyse the social profile of their beneficiaries and the linguistic expression the hagiographer used to point out their status. According to their main motif, we could place the miracles 1-4 in a first group, in which Thekla managed to defeat the ancient gods venerated in Seleukeia or in the surrounding area: Sarpedonios (*Mir.* 1), Athena (*Mir.* 2), Aphrodite (*Mir.* 3) and Zeus (*Mir.* 4). In a second group we could gather the miracles in which she protects whole cities; not only Seleukeia (*Mir.* 5), but also Ikonion (*Mir.* 6), Dalisandos (*Mir.* 26) and Selinoos (*Mir.* 27).

Thirdly, the largest category of miracles is composed by those narrating her healings (*Mir.* 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41). She normally appears at night to the patient and prescribes him or her the cure of her/his illness (*Mir.* 7, 8, 11, 14, 18, 30, 38, 39 and 40), but, in some cases she uses directly her hands (*Mir.* 17 and 41) or provokes the recovery of the sick person in a different way (*Mir.* 12, 23, 24 and 37).

Fourthly, we have distinguished several groups of miracles in which Thekla protects her patrimony (*Mir.* 10, 22, 28, 30 and 32), resolves different iniquities (*Mir.* 9, 12, and 35), keeps safe important personalities

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<sup>13</sup> Millar 2006, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> López-Salvá 1976, 147-188.

<sup>15</sup> Gil 1969, 356; Hanson 1980, 1395-1427.

(*Mir.* 13, 15, 19), helps two women to get back the love of their husbands (*Mir.* 20 and 42), punishes strictly crimes committed by certain criminals (*Mir.* 33 and 34) and causes the restoration of some stolen properties (*Mir.* 21 and 43).

Finally, in a miscellaneous category we could combine miracles 9 in which she predicts a catastrophe, 31 in which she checks and supports the composition of the *LM*, 44 in which the author inserts a first conclusion of the text, 45 in which the saint teaches a woman how to read and 46 in which Thekla sleeps with other two women in her sanctuary.

## 2. Collective miracles

The author of the text believes that all mankind are beneficiary of Thekla's miracles (*Mir.* 10, 32-34: οὔτε γὰρ ἔληξεν, οὔτε μὴν λήξει ποτὲ τοῦ θαυματουργεῖν, ἀγαθὴ τε οὖσα καὶ πρὸς ἕκαστον ἀεὶ τῶν αἰτούντων ἐπικαμπτομένη. οὗτοι δὲ εἰσι πάντες ἄνθρωποι). It is true that in the *Miracles* we can observe a wide range of characters receiving the favour of the saint, but most of them belong to a high social status.

This kind of collective protection clearly appears in miracles 5, 6, 7 and 27, those describing her intervention to assist an entire city. Her δύναμις seems to be the only way to control the instability of the region provoked by the Isaurian bandits<sup>16</sup>, whose raids in these territories were greatly feared from the first century AD, following the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>17</sup>. The fifth miracle of the collection narrates the protection provided by Thekla to Seleukeia when facing an attack by a group of bandits, identified in the text with the Hagarenes (Ἀγαρηνῶν), resulting very probably from a latter interpolation. Following Dagrón's statement (1978: 114-115), it seems very implausible to accept an Arabic incursion at the time in the Cilician plain. In any case, Thekla appears screaming above the walls to lead the Seleukeians against their enemies as the captain of the army (ἡ μάρτυς ὑπερφανεῖσα μόνον τῶν τειχῶν καὶ ἐπαστράψασα καὶ μονουχὶ ἐπαλαλάξασα κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων). In addition, she offers a similar protection to Ikonion in the next miracle.

The two other collective miracles in which she saves an entire city are not so different. The main topic of these miracles is a siege (πολιορκία). The hagiographer remembers when Thekla appeared in Dalisandos to rescue the city from a siege in miracle 26. Related to the same situation he

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<sup>16</sup> Shaw 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Honey 2006.

writes miracle 27, in this case talking about the city of Selinous. The enemies have discovered a path to attack it and Thekla ordered to build a sanctuary dedicated to her to intimidate the enemies and make them run away.

The instability of the region in the aftermath of the Isaurian attacks persists in some other miracles of the collection and the supernatural interventions of Thekla are not enough to control the Isaurian bandits. Actually, they manage to steal the saint's treasure in miracle 28. At the end, Thekla defeats these criminals, but insecurity persists. In this miracle, the hagiographer compares twice the Isaurians with the Laestrigonians (πρὸς τὴν Λαιστρυγονίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν ἠπειγόντο γῆν / φεύγοντας ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτῶν πάλιν Λαιστρυγονίαν). He aims to link the Isaurians with this mythic city appearing in Homer's *Odyssey*, whose inhabitants were heartless and ferocious (*Od.* X 60 ss.). The text shows the barbarian way of life of these Isaurians who live in the sky-high mountains (ἰσονεφέσιν ὄρεσι) situated to the west of Seleukeia. Moreover, the constant failure of the Isaurian attempts against her sanctuary does not move them to stop their criminal activities.

In fact, in miracle 32 bishop Dexianos decides to carry the treasure of the saint from her sanctuary to the centre of the town, a place in which it was obviously safer. The author of the text describes the saint running around the temple and saying that Dexianos has scorned her. The action taken by Dexianos was made in anticipation of the danger. It is true that the power of the martyr seems to be infinite, but with this movement Dexianos tried to avoid situations like the one described in *Mir.* 22, where the saint had to pursue a group of bandits having stolen a cross from her sanctuary.

In the case of *Mir.* 32, Hellenkemper interprets this attitude of the saint as a clear evidence of the tension between the attendant (παρέδροσ) of the monastery of Thekla and the bishop of the city<sup>18</sup>. The first one would not trust the second when the treasure of the saint was involved, even though Dexianos had been an attendant himself before having reached the bishopric of the city. Following Dagron's statement (1978, 75) the distinction παρέδροσ καὶ φύλαξ τῆς ἁγίας Θέκλας was held by a priestly aristocracy of the region. The term παρέδροσ comes from the Classical age (Liddell & Scott *s.v.* παρέδροσ), when it also meant "assessor, coadjutor". The term was often used in prose to refer to the counsellors of Xerxes

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<sup>18</sup> Hellenkemper 1992, 67-68.

(Hdt. VII 147; VIII 135), to the Ephors at Sparta (Hdt. VI 65) or to the assessors of the Archons at Athens (Arist. *Athen.* 56, 1).

Additionally, within the category of healing miracles, it must be underlined that *Mir.* 25 and 36 could also be considered collective inasmuch as they describe how Thekla healed an eye epidemic afflicting Seleukeia (*Mir.* 25) and a sickness that spread among animals of the region (*Mir.* 39). Finally, *Mir.* 15 also deserves to be placed in this group. Here the saint rescues a boat drugged by a summer storm that has come from Cyprus on the occasion of her festival when all the crew was at the shrine and only two young slaves remained aboard. The hagiographer describes Thekla as an authentic sailor, rather as a captain, steering the boat and sailing it to the port in which it is to harbour.

ἰδοὺ καὶ ἡ παρθένος ἐπὶ τῆς χειμαζομένης καὶ ἤδη καταδύεσθαι μελλούσης νεῶς φαίνεται, τοῖς τε πασὶν ἤδη λειποθυμοῦσι θαρρεῖν ἐπικελευομένη καὶ οἰάκων ἀπτομένη καὶ κάλως ἀνασειούσα καὶ τὸ ἰστίον ἀνατεινούσα καὶ τῷ χειμῶνι ἐπιτιμῶσα καὶ πάντα ποιούσα ὅσα τε ναύταις καὶ ὅσα κυβερνήταις πρέπει καὶ ὅσα αὖ πάλιν ἀποστόλῳ καὶ μάρτυρι καὶ πάντοθεν ἐχούση τὸ δύνασθαι (*Mir.* 15, 27-33)

### 3. Individual miracles

Continuing with individual miracles, we should discuss the priests featured in the text. In miracles 7-12 we can read the assistance of Thekla to the same Dexianos, bishop and ancient attendant of the temple of the saint, whom she heals from an illness provoked by a fatal daemon (*Mir.* 7) and his broken leg (*Mir.* 8); Menodoros, bishop of Aigai who had received a heritage from a pious woman, desired by a man called Eutropios, which the bishop could only keep thanks to Thekla's intervention (*Mir.* 9); Simposios, an Arian bishop who ordered to destroy an inscription in the sanctuary proclaiming the consubstantiality of the Trinity and who, seeing that the person appointed for the task could not destroy it, finally abandoned this thought and came back to orthodoxy (*Mir.* 10); and Aurelios, spiritual father of Simposios, who had a fearsome disease cured by the saint with a homemade remedy when he was a child and suffered the scrofula (χοιράδες) (*Mir.* 11).

The hagiographer's own story belongs to this group and he tries to underline it in miracle 12, where he describes in a double narration two interventions of Thekla to protect him. Firstly, she heals him of an illness called anthrax (ἄνθραξ) already known by Hippocrates, Dioscorides or

Galen<sup>19</sup>. As it is usual in this kind of miraculous situations, the hagiographer features a scene in which the physicians are surpassed by the power of the illness (ὡς δὲ καὶ τῆς τέχνης καὶ τῶν φαρμάκων κρείττον ἦν τὸ δεινόν); this is a literary topic very often used by the author of the text to underline the efficiency of Thekla in contrast to the incapacity of the medical science:

τῆς τῶν ἰατρῶν τέχνης μεταχειρισσαμένης μὲν τὸ πάθος ποικίλως,  
ἡττηθείσης δὲ ὁμοῦς τῇ τοῦ πάθους κακοηθείᾳ (*Mir.* 11, 10-11)

πολὺς δὲ καὶ ὁ χρόνος ἦν ἤδη τῆς ἀρρωστίας, ἀπειρήκει δὲ πᾶς ἰατρὸς  
καὶ πᾶς οἰκέτης (*Mir.* 14, 25-26)

ἢ ἀμελείας ἢ ἀτεχνίας ἰατρῶν τοῦτο ἐργασαμένης (*Mir.* 23, 6-7)

ἀπορίας δὲ πολλῆς καὶ ἀμηχανίας μεστοὺς τοὺς ἰατρούς, ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ  
νικωμένους (*Mir.* 24, 11-12)

ὡς δὲ καὶ παῖδες ἰατρῶν ἀπειρήκεσαν, καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ κρείττον λοιπὸν  
ἀνθρωπίνης βοήθειας ἐνόμιζε τὸ κακόν, καὶ πᾶσα ἐλπίς αὐτὸν ἐπελελοίπει  
ζωῆς, καταφεύγει πρὸς τὸ μόνον κρησφύγετον τῶν τοιούτων κακῶν (*Mir.*  
38, 4-6)

Nevertheless, along with the Fathers of the Church and other Christian writers of the time, he respects traditional medicine<sup>20</sup> and even seems to know somehow the medical treatises of Hippocrates or Galen<sup>21</sup>. In this case, though, they had found at least one solution: they should amputate one of the fingers of the hagiographer to secure his life. The night before the intervention, while he was sleeping, he received a visit of Thekla in a dream and immediately overcomes the illness. At the end, he describes the return of the physicians, disgruntled by the fact that they had lost money on account of her miracle (τάχα δέ τι ἂν μικρὸν αὐτῇ καὶ ἐπιμεμόμενοι ὡς διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἐπίσκεψιν καὶ ἰατρείαν καὶ ἀπόμισθοι γεγονότες). This is the only reference, simply anecdotal, responding to a critique of traditional medicine, also to be found in other Byzantine collections of miracles<sup>22</sup>.

This respect for Hippocratic medicine shown by the author of the *LM* is probably due to his classical formation and his passion for ancient Greek

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<sup>19</sup> This disease is quoted by Hippocrates 28 times, 79 by Dioscorides and 163 by Galen. It appears as well in another collection of miracles such as that of Cyrus and John (*Mir.* 62).

<sup>20</sup> Lecoq 1997.

<sup>21</sup> López-Salvá 1972, 223-224.

<sup>22</sup> In the hagiographical tradition we can find the story of Cosmas and Damian, called ἀναργῆροι because they did not receive any remuneration for their healings. For an analysis of the tension between traditional and holy medicine, see Novembri 2013.

literature. He usually quotes Homer, Aischylos, Herodotos and other pagan writers<sup>23</sup>, and even considers himself a man of letters. Actually, he has a double personality characterised by his status as priest and also as rhetorician. The second part of miracle 12 is related to the first feature and was the first clue to suspect that the *LM* could not have been written by Basil of Seleukeia, as it was *communis opinio* until the 70's, but by another priest of the city<sup>24</sup>. The reason is quite simple. Basil of Seleukeia, the best known writer of the city at the time, is the one who excommunicated the author of the text, becoming his worst enemy. The hagiographer uses the diminutives *μειράκιον* and *παιδαρίον* to refer to him. This attitude is interpreted by Dagron (1978, 319 n. 8) as a generational conflict between both.

On the other hand, due to his profession, Thekla is shown as the protector of rhetoricians and grammarians of Seleukeia, a topic already analyzed by Kaster in his study about grammarians in Late Antiquity<sup>25</sup>. In fact, the author of the text describes Thekla as a protector and patroness of men of letters. The first miracle in which we can clearly appreciate the relationship between Thekla and the world of the letters is 31. Here the hagiographer describes what happened to him while he was writing his work. He confesses that he had neglected his task, was really tired and wrote with certain weariness.

ὀλιγόρως μὲν γὰρ εἶχον ἤδη περὶ τοῦ συλλέγειν καὶ γράφειν αὐτὰ ταῦτα, ὁμολογῶ, καὶ ῥαθύμως ἠπτόμην λοιπὸν καὶ δέλτου καὶ γραφίδος, ὡς ἂν καὶ ἀπειρηκῶς λοιπὸν περὶ τὴν τῶν θαυμάτων τούτων ἔρυνάν τε καὶ συλλογὴν. (*Mir.* 31, 3-7)

Suddenly, the author is visited by Thekla who approves and encourages him to continue his work and complete his compilation. After this intervention our author narrates other apparitions to men of letters in his collection. With a rhetorical question he calls upon the presence of grammarians and rhetoricians and introduces the following next miracles (38, 39, 40, 41), characterised by some of these features, in which we can also find the author of the text, who shows his condition of man of letters in miracle 41.

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<sup>23</sup> Narro 2010, 127-138; *id.* 2012, 303-305.

<sup>24</sup> Dagron 1974, 5-11.

<sup>25</sup> Kaster 1997, 239, 321 and 431.

εἶτα οὐ κατεροῦσιν ἡμῶν οἱ λόγοι, καὶ καταβοήσουσι πρὸς τοὺς ἐλλογίμους τῶν ἀνδρῶν, εἰ μόνου παροφθεῖεν ὑφ' ἡμῶν, καὶ ταῦτα οὐ παραφθέντες ὑπὸ τῆς μάρτυρος, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ πολλάκις τετυχηκότες θαυμάτων ἐν ἀνδράσι σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἐλλογίμοις ; φέρε οὖν, ἃ τέως μεμαθήκαμεν εἰπόμεν, ἵνα ἔχοιεν ἡμῖν καὶ οἱ λόγοι χάριν, ὡς τῆς οὕτω καὶ αὐτοὶ μακαρίας τῶν θαυμάτων χοροστασίας ἀξιωθέντες. (*Mir.* 37, 5-11)

In miracle 38 the text mentions a family of grammarians (γραμματιστής): the father Alypius, a grammarian who taught in Seleukeia, had a son also dedicated to letters, Olimpios<sup>26</sup>, whose visits to his father enable the accomplishment of the prodigy of Thekla. In addition to the original way in which the saint made Alypius regain his health, it is rather interesting to focus on the beginning of the miracle and the dialogue between the grammarian and Thekla.

The author underlines the rapidity of the intervention of Thekla and tells how she appeared to Alypius and smiled admiringly to the witty response of the man when he quoted Homer (*Il.* I 365). The admiration of Thekla facing this verse stresses her love for the letters, something already anticipated when the hagiographer had used the adjectives φιλόλογος and φιλόμουσος to characterise the saint a few lines before.

ἐπιφοιτήσασα νύκτωρ αὐτῷ καὶ ἦ ἔθος αὐτῇ πρὸς τοὺς ἀρρώστους ἀεὶ ποιεῖν, παραδειξάσα τε ἑαυτὴν ἥτις εἶη τῷ σχήματι, εὐθὺς ἤρετο ὁ τί τε πάσχοι καὶ ὅ τί βούλοιο. ὁ δὲ ὑπολαβὼν ἔφη·

«οἶσθα· τί ἦ τοι ταῦτ' ἰδυίη πάντ' ἀγορεύω ; »

ὁ ἐστὶ μὲν ἐξ Ὀμήρου, ὁ δὲ λαβὼν εὐστοχότατα – μᾶλλον ἤπερ Ἀχιλλεὺς τότε πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα τὴν Θέτιν – εἶπεν, ἴν' ἄμα καὶ πρεσβυῆ τὴν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τέχνην, καὶ δυσωπήσῃ τὴν παρθένον τῷ καλλίστῳ τούτῳ καὶ ἀρμοδιωτάτῳ. ἐπιμειδιάσασα [20] γοῦν ἡ μάρτυς καὶ ἠσθεῖσα ἐπὶ τε τῷ ἀνδρὶ, ἐπὶ τε τῷ ἔπει, θαυμάσασα δὲ καὶ ὡς μάλα ἀρμοδίως ἀπεκρίνατο [...] (*Mir.* 38, 11-21)

Following the *cursus* of late antique higher education (μετὰ δὴ τὸν γραμματιστὴν ἐπὶ τοὺς σοφιστὰς ἴωμεν), as Johnson suggests<sup>27</sup>, the author continues this block of miracles with the sophists Isokasios (*Mir.* 39) and Aretarchos (*Mir.* 40). Firstly, in *Mir.* 39 Isokasios falls ill while he was at Aigai. He needed a quiet place to rest and recover and decides to go to the

<sup>26</sup> In this miracle two sons of Alypius appear, but, as Kaster has pointed out, it exists a mistake in the transmission of the manuscripts and the name of Solymios in the edition of the text should be modified in Olimpios: Kaster 1983, 301-303.

<sup>27</sup> Talbot and Johnson 2012, 159 and 426.



shrine of Thekla. Although she reproached his faithlessness, she did not refuse to heal the sophist (ὅτε καὶ τῆς ἀπιστίας προσονειδίσασα αὐτῷ τῆς βοηθείας οὐκ ἐφθόνησεν), as the author asserts following the testimony of a certain Eudokios who reported the tale to him.

Secondly, *Mir.* 40 tells a similar story but with a different ending, due to the attitude of the beneficiary, the sophist Aretarchos, who had attributed his healing to the daemon Sarpedonios instead of attributing it to Thekla. In *Mir.* 1 Thekla had defeated and hushed Sarpedonios, an ancient god venerated in Seleukeia, created by divinising the Homeric hero Sarpedonios (*Od.* VI 119 and 169) and his subsequent assimilation to Apollo<sup>28</sup>, who had the power to heal people and pronounce oracles. The rivalry between Sarpedonios and Thekla appears often in the text, but, when the hagiographer listens from Aretarchos that it has been Sarpedonios who had healed his illness (ὁ γὰρ Σαρπηδόσιός μοι, φησί, τὸ ζητῆσαι τε παρ' αὐτῆς καὶ λαβεῖν προσέταξεν), he became very angry and considered this attribution a consequence of his ignorance.

Finally, in miracle 41 the hagiographer is once again the main character. He remembers how much the saint loves the discourses of men of letters (οὕτω δὴ φιλόλογος τέ ἐστιν ἢ μάρτυς καὶ χαίρει ταῖς διὰ τῶν λόγων ταύταις εὐφημίαις) and reports how the saint assisted him when he had to pronounce a panegyric dedicated to her and when he fell ill with an ear infection. After explaining how the saint appeared at night and shook his ear to deliver him from his malady, the author talks again about his special relationship with Thekla, asserting that she often appears to assist him in his literary tasks.

καὶ τῆς ἱερατικῆς δέ μοι καταξιοθέντι γερουσίας καὶ τοῦ καταλόγου τῶν διδασκάλων καὶ ἱερέων, συμπάρῃν τε ὡς τὰ πολλά, καὶ νύκτωρ ἐπιφαινομένη βιβλίον τί μοι πάντως ἢ χάρτην ὤρεγεν, ὃ πάντως μοι πλείστης εὐδοκιμήσεως σύμβολον ἦν τε καὶ ἐδόκει. εἰ δὲ μέλλοντί μοι λέγειν τι μὴ ὀφθῆ τοῦτο ποιούσα, τό γε ἀποβησόμενον πάλιν εὐδῆλον ἦν.  
(*Mir.* 41, 27-32)

Moreover, the saint also helps different personalities from the imperial administration, such as general Satornilos (*Mir.* 13) or the herald Ambrosios (*Mir.* 16). The first one, Satornilos, is praised by the hagiographer for having killed the impious priest Severus, counsellor of Aelia Eudokia, wife of Theodosios II, and for having controlled the raids of the Isaurian bandits. According to Dagron (1978: 323 n.2), Severus and

<sup>28</sup> Radermacher 1916, 66; Usener 1948, 218.

the deacon John had accompanied Aelia Eudokia during her semi-exile in Jerusalem, where they had pronounced some heretical statements. Then, the emperor sent his *comes domesticorum* Saturninus (= Saturnilos) to execute them. The text reveals that Thekla had helped him in many battles as the Greek gods did in Homer's *Iliad* (καὶ ἄλλοτε μὲν πολλάκις ὄρωντι πρὸς πόλεμον συμπαρῆν τε καὶ προήσπιζεν ἢ μάρτυς καὶ πᾶσαν αὐτῷ συγκατεργάζετο νίκην) and reports the way in which Thekla saved his life by warning that his enemies had set up an ambush for him. Thanks to the saint he avoided the ambush and defeated the enemies killing them all.

She provides similar protection to the herald Ambrosios in miracle 16. In this case, the saint protects him during his journey from Seleukeia to Constantinople across Cilicia and Cappadocia when he takes over the transport of an amount of gold that must be brought to the imperial city. In the most dangerous part of the route, usually frequented by bandits, he sees a group of soldiers accompanying him to frighten the enemies. Obviously, this body of soldiers was only a delusion created by Thekla, compared in this tale to Thetis by means of a quotation from Homer (*Il.* I 351), to keep him safe.

Until this moment we have only mentioned men as beneficiaries of the saint's interventions. Nonetheless, there is an important amount of miracles in which a woman is depicted asking for a favour to the saint or praying to her to obtain something that she finally obtains. In miracle 14, a noble woman from Claudiopolis called Anna, quite concerned with the impiety of her husband, asks the saint to convert her husband. After having sent him an ailment to sweeten her husband's temperament, Thekla appears to profit from his weakness and make him believe in God. This intervention of Thekla shows how she takes care of pious marriages and tries to preserve the Christian status of this sacrament by attending the petitions made by a married woman. However, that's not the only one.

In fact, in miracle 20 Thekla listens to the desperate entreaty of the wife of general Bitianos, who wrongs his wife being unfaithful, and finally solves their problems. Some years after this intervention, Bitianos died and his wife married another man. The hagiographer points out that he could not explain how she does substitute the slayer of the Persian (περσολέτης<sup>29</sup>) for a foreigner called Gregory.

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<sup>29</sup> The word περσολέτης is used to compare Bitianos to Alexander The Great, name in this way in the *Historia Alexandri Magni* written by the so-called Pseudo-Kallisthenes (*Recensio* α 3, 22, 12; *Recensio* β 3, 22, 31; *Recensio* γ 3, 22, 41; *Recensio* λ 48, 13).

Furthermore, in miracle 42 Thekla also assists another woman, Kalliste, in her relationship with her husband. His mistress, a woman of the stage<sup>30</sup>, spoiled Kalliste's beauty by means of some kind of poison to move him away from her. Thekla prescribed her a remedy to recover her normal appearance and be able to please her husband once more. In addition, she even takes care of wedding celebrations, as we can see in *Mir.* 21, where she visits a woman named Paula to reveal her the place where a robber had buried a belt made of gold and precious stones previously stolen from a wedding celebration.

Additionally, there is a large group of women assisted by the saint in many different situations. In miracle 18 Tigriane and Aba are healed by the martyr when they both break a leg<sup>31</sup>. In the following miracle (19) Thekla saves the noble woman Bassiane when she was pregnant and rushed to one of the cisterns of the shrine, because, due to the stifling heat, she was very nearly dead.

Another group of miracles in which women are protagonists consists of numbers 43, 45, 46 and the unfinished tale in 44. In miracle 43 Thekla betrays a virgin of her shrine for stealing the jewels of a certain Bassiane, a poor woman who had stayed in her temple running away from her family. In the following one, the hagiographer starts talking about Dosithea but suddenly changes his mind and hurriedly concludes his tale. Then, in miracle 45 the martyr teaches Xenarchis how to read by divine inspiration when someone gave her a book of the Gospels and then starts reading it, even if she could not before. Finally, in miracle 46 the author narrates the night in which Dyonisia, who had decided to renounce her husband, was sleeping in the church of the martyr next to another woman called Sosanna and how they saw Thekla among them, flying up and slipping back into her bedchamber, where it is said that she had penetrated into the earth (εις ὄν και καταδύναι λέγεται).

Finally, there is another group of individual miracles that we could group together: those regarding eye sickness. In *Mir.* 23 Thekla heals Pausikakos, a poor manual worker afflicted with an eye disease. A very different case is narrated in *Mir.* 24, where the saint prepares a spectacular

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<sup>30</sup> The consideration of this woman as τὸ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς γύναιον is due to the negative opinion about the theatre and the spectacles among the Christian writers of this time: Vandenberghe 1955, 7-1, 34-36; Graffin 1978, 115-130; Markus 115-121; Kahlos 2007, 126-132; Arredondo 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Thekla had already cured Leontios in *Mir.* 17, in which it is described how he fell down with other workmen when they were working at a great height and he asked to be carried to Thekla's shrine for healing.

intervention to deliver a little baby from his eye illness. While he is playing with the birds living in the shrine, one of the cranes, acting upon Thekla's instructions, pecks the eye of the baby with its beak and makes the purulence come out, as if it were done with a scalpel. Finally, in *Mir.* 37, she cures an anonymous Cypriot pilgrim deprived of eyesight.

In spite of all these prodigious interventions in which Thekla offers her power to heal or help people, there are also some miracles in which she punishes someone's intemperance or bad actions. The first case can be found in *Mir.* 29 where the bishop of Aigai Modestos, who had forbidden the people of his city to depart to the shrine of Thekla, is punished by the saint with death. A similar destiny awaits the man who does not piously celebrate the festivity of the saint and seduces a girl instead in *Mir.* 33. After boasting about it to other men, a raging daemon appeared and flayed him, according to the hagiographer, as it was customary among Persians<sup>32</sup>. The saint's deadly revenge continues on *Mir.* 34, where she provoked the death of a couple of drunk delinquents who had stolen a piece of gold in Seleukeia and then attempted to violate one of the virgins of Thekla's shrine when she was wandering outside the sacred precincts. Both died at the same time and in the same place. In *Mir.* 35 the situation is quite different, but the end of the unfair man featured in is not very different. The hagiographer tells the story of Pappos and Aulerios, council members responsible for some military expenditures. Unfortunately, the second one dies and Pappos appropriates all business benefits, leaving only debts to Aulerio's children. Thekla appeared in a dream to tell him that he was going to die in a week and when that day came Pappos died. However, the saint sometimes be less severe. In fact, in *Mir.* 30 she only shows her anger against bishop Maximos for having accepted to bury Hyperechios in her church following the advice of the rhetorician Eusebius. She appeared twice to the workers who were trying to make the hole and even to Maximos in a dream. He finally reversed his decision and calmed down the rage of the saint.

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<sup>32</sup> He is referring to the a passage of Herodotos' *Histories* (V 21). In this section the Persian king Cambyses ordered to flay the corrupt judge Sisamnes for having been inequitable with regard to an amount of money. With his skin, by order of Cambyses, the chair in which Sisamnes successor (his own son) would seat was upholstered. In this manner, every time he passed sentence, he would remember where he was seated.

#### 4. Linguistic remarks on social status

As we have seen before, throughout the 46 miracles of Thekla a large diversity of characters profiting from the gifts of the saint are being depicted. Most of them belong to high social strata. Indeed, we have talked about priests, rhetoricians, grammarians, sophists, generals, imperial heralds, and other noble men and women. In fact, the hagiographer always underlines the nobility of the characters describing them with a range of linguistic expressions repeated in many sections of the text. As most of them have this high status, when someone poorer is featured, he or she is used as evidence of Thekla's kindness and protection over all mankind.

In fact, our statement can be shown in miracles 23 and 43, in which the beneficiaries of the intervention of the saint are not wealthy or noble people. The introduction of the miracle of Pausikakos stresses these social differences between him and the others.

τὴν δὲ κατὰ Πausικακὸν θαυματουργίαν, τίς ἂν ἐκὼν παραδράμοι ; εἰ γὰρ καὶ εἰς πένητας καὶ χειρώνακτας τετέλεκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος, ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἐν ἴσῃ τάξει τοῖς μεγάλα δυναμένοις καὶ περικλεέσιν ἠξίωται τοῦ θαύματος καὶ ἠρίθμηται παρὰ τῆς μάρτυρος. (*Mir.* 23, 1-5)

This kind of equality is expressed again at the beginning of miracle 43. The author tries not to discriminate against the characters of his narration, although most of them are, as we have pointed out, people of a higher social status. In this case he introduces the other Bassiane as such.

μήτε δὲ τοῦ ἐτέρου γυναιίου ἀμνημονήσωμεν, εἰ καὶ πενιχρὸν καὶ εὐτελεῖς τὸ γύναιον. (*Mir.* 43, 1-2)

With regard to the nobility of the other characters in the miracles, the hagiographer uses an often limited range of adjectives to describe them. His favourite adjective for this goal is *εὐπατρίδης*, appearing 6 times in the miracles to characterise these noble men and women (*Mir.* 13, 9; 14, 1; 19, 3; 37, 1 and 44, 6). The excellence of the family seems to be the most important feature to show their nobility, perhaps expressed also in terms of *εὐγένεια* (*Mir.* 30, 2; 42, 2).

Additionally, the other defining point is the fame of the person featured. This notion can be expressed in very different ways, although most of them are derived from the root \*σημ-. These are the cases of the adjectives *περίσημος* (*Mir.* 14, 5; 18, 3; 37, 2; 39, 15) and *ἐπίσημος* (44, 5). In addition to these two terms, the author also uses adjectives such as *λαμπρός* (*Mir.* 14, 1; 18, 4; 39, 15), *σεμνός* (*Mir.* 42, 2) and *γεννάδας* (*Mir.* 13, 2), the last one considered a Doric term in the Liddell-Scott, even if, in our opinion, it must be classified as an Atticism because it was recovered

by some authors belonging to this movement, such as Lucian, who uses it 14 times, or the grammarian Julius Pollux (I 206, 5; III 120, 3).

Nobility and fame are not the only virtues to denote a high social status. Wealth is the third side of the triangle. The hagiographer does not usually speak about the personal fortunes of miracle beneficiaries, except when describing the wife of the general Bitianos (*Mir.* 20). In this case, the hagiographer, annoyed by the second marriage of this woman, seems to criticise her by using terms such as εὐδαίμων or πλοῦτος.

## 5. Final remarks

The *Miracles* of Thekla describe a wide range of personalities from the city of Seleukeia, the regions of Cilicia and Isauria and even some other characters with a position of responsibility inside the structure of the Byzantine Empire. As we have seen, all these beneficiaries belong to the highest strata of society. In fact, the *LM* is a text of high literary quality, full of quotations and subtle reminiscences of other precedent works indicating that the narration was directed towards cultivated and well-educated readers, able to delight in every detail.

The double status of the hagiographer already suggests who his readers were. First of all he is a churchman. That is why he featured a great number of priests in miracles and why most of them were at least related to the city of Seleukeia. Secondly, he had an extraordinary literary talent and talked about his first panegyric in Thekla's shrine in *Mir.* 41, after having narrated the miracles of other rhetoricians, grammarians and sophists. All these men of letters denote the presence of an important school of grammar at this time, whose best pupil, at least with the texts preserved until now, was probably the author of this *LM*.

The portrait of the city, however, is not restricted to these two categories. In fact, the other noble characters described complete the local elite of the city and are eventually accompanied by some other people from a lower stratum, like the beneficiaries of *Mir.* 23 and 43. This elite consists as well of generals, soldiers and generally people from a noble family, a notion expressed by some recurrent terms. These noble and distinguished people were also involved in the activities of the sanctuary and in the bloom of the city and the region, but were, unfortunately, very often threatened by the Isaurian bandits evoked in many miracles. Thekla was for Seleukeia not only a saint or a patroness, but also an economic guarantee providing them with the fame of a healing sanctuary and the benefits that come with pilgrims looking the saint's interventions. Thus, in the *Miracles* we can observe not only an extremely interesting literary

work, but also an image, a portrait of the city of Seleukeia and of the way in which its inhabitants were related to the sanctuary and to the divine essence of the δούαμις of Thekla.

POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY  
AT THE BOUNDARIES OF BYZANTIUM  
(5<sup>TH</sup>-7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES):  
SOME METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

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## 1. Introduction

This brief contribution aims at providing some thoughts on the historical evolution of Late Antique Greek Poetry in the first centuries of Byzantium and, specifically, on the changes occurred between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries in the boundaries between poetry and philosophy. Late Antiquity has often been defined as a time of change, transformation and exchange<sup>1</sup>: the dynamics between foreigners and citizens, borders and capital, main tradition and minor traditions, as the sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt would put it, will throw new light on the development of the Eastern Empire during Late Antiquity. The boundaries between the notions of Roman and Barbarian, centre and periphery were progressively somewhat blurred, and both the subjectivity of the inhabitants of the Empire, as well as the phenomenology of power, divinity and the arts, underwent an important evolution.

The aesthetic principles of Classicism in the Arts evolved swiftly in Late Antiquity, as a sort of prelude to the Byzantine Era. In the visual arts, changes were very remarkable in the overall production of statues, reliefs, textiles, mosaics and paintings already since the Constantinian age, and a certain degree of influence of innovative non-Graeco-Roman traditions is

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<sup>1</sup> As a general framework we consider still valid the theories expressed by Brown 1971. See also Bowersock 1990, Cameron 1993 and Bowersock, Brown and Grabar (eds.) 1995.



also attested. This new artistic sensibility will be developed from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century creating a new aesthetic synthesis of great value.<sup>2</sup> As far as literature is concerned, some tendencies of innovation from tradition, a predilection for mixed genres, and certain baroque style are also found<sup>3</sup>. The extent to which both pagan and Christian poetry in the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire puts forward a successful mimesis of traditional models, such as Homer, Hesiod or Callimachus, with a higher or lower degree of innovation, is an ongoing discussion in scholarship<sup>4</sup>. Speaking of Latin poetry, Michael Roberts define the tendency towards literary *poikilia* as the “jewelled style”<sup>5</sup>, and Greek poetry was especially fond of this sort of *préciosité avant la lettre*<sup>6</sup>, deeply influenced by rhetorical schools<sup>7</sup>. It all resulted in a melting pot of new artistic sensibilities throughout the Empire: the evident imprint of Rhetorics from the so-called Third Sophistic onwards has been often commented. But, what role played Philosophy in this aesthetic context? What can the ideological framework of Late Antiquity, i.e. Neoplatonism, tell us about this change of perspective. In fact, if there is an ideology of Late Antiquity, it is undoubtedly Neoplatonism. Epistemologically, we understand ideology in a somewhat Nietzschean sense proposed by Georges Dumézil, that is to say: “a conception or appreciation of the great forces that drive the world and society, and an understanding of the relations between them” or “the inventory of guiding ideas that govern the thought and conduct of a society”<sup>8</sup>. We should be aware that a thorough study of the influence of Late Antique Philosophy upon the contemporary aesthetic views could throw some new light on the ideological transformations of this period, since both late pagan and Christian mentalities were deeply influenced by this current of thought.

Our working hypothesis is that, if we study the relationship between philosophy and early Byzantine poetry through a selection of works from the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries we will certainly have a wider panorama in order to consider the ways in which arts and society evolved in parallel towards a fully medieval Byzantine culture. Of course, a detailed study of

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<sup>2</sup> See Elsner 2004. For the “new language”, e.g., in the funerary arts, cf. Thomas 2000.

<sup>3</sup> On literature, see, for example, Cameron 2004.

<sup>4</sup> See the arguments of Hose 2004, for instance.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson 2006a.

<sup>7</sup> Miguélez Cavero 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Dubuisson 1990, 276-277.

all these authors is not our aim at the moment. Since this is the third of a series of contributions on this subject, as a more modest further step in our research, we would like to present some methodological remarks on the persistence of the Neoplatonic leitmotifs in diverse Late Antique authors who have lived and worked often at the boundaries of the Eastern Empire. Further work could definitely demonstrate the “ideological” background provided by Neoplatonism for Greek epic style of the early Byzantine period, according to the indications on aesthetic and philosophical principles to be found in Plotinos, Porphyry and Proklos<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. Some thoughts on Neoplatonic aesthetics

The possibility of knowing, or not knowing, the divine world – a key issue for the Neoplatonists, – is related to a Neoplatonic “phenomenology” of art: the perception of especially inspired artworks as a possible way for the human mind to catch a glimpse of the One. This approach could be applied to examine Late Empire Greek poetry. We are of the opinion that this could clarify the philosophical and theological background of Byzantium first poetic school, from Nonnos of Panopolis to George of Pisidia. In fact, this two authors represent two literary landmarks of historical-cultural relevance in two key moments of deep change in the Eastern Empire: on the one hand, Nonnos and his two attributed works – the paganizing *Dionysiaca* and the clearly Christian *Paraphrase of St. John’s Gospel*– represent the final confrontation between paganism and Christianity in 5<sup>th</sup> century; on the other hand, George of Pisidia, a poet at the court of Emperor Herakleios, witnessed the epoch of the emergence of Islam in 7<sup>th</sup> century. A comparative study of the ideological mechanisms operating in the background of Greek epic in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium should then focus on the examination of the literary aspects of Christian Neoplatonism as reflected in the epic after the model of Nonnos, which will precisely decline definitively after George of Pisidia, who can be considered the last important representative of the so called “Nonnian School”(cf. *infra* section 4). Late Antique Greek poetry is particularly important for the shaping of Byzantine culture<sup>10</sup>, for this poetic school will be imitated throughout the ages until the Palaiologan Age<sup>11</sup>. In this

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<sup>9</sup> On Neoplatonism in general and its influence upon the ideology of its time see Lloyd 1998, Smith 2004 and Remes 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Tissoni 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Hernández de la Fuente 2002.

context, the interaction between poetry and philosophy can potentially throw new light upon the history of mentalities of two key moments of early Byzantine history, characterised by major religious changes.

The interaction between Late Antiquity Greek poetry and Neoplatonism is an aspect that, in my opinion, has not been studied enough. Plotinus opened the way in the *Enneads* for the dissemination of a new approach to classical aesthetics and the poetical canon by considering art as mimesis, in direct contact with the world of ideas, which is able to reflect the presence of the highest unit and the highest knowledge of the intelligible world<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, his disciple Porphyry, who is known for his extraordinary allegories on godly statues in his lost treatise *Περί ἀγαλμάτων*, theorised on the consideration of how an artistic representation of the deity could lead the human soul to a higher level of understanding the divinity<sup>13</sup>. Of course, the artist had to follow certain rules of imitation, so that perception in a glimpse of the divine in certain statues (ἀγάλματα, not simply εἰκόνες, following the linguistic distinction of the Greek language), if they are correctly executed, could be possible for mortals. However, Neoplatonic aesthetic ideas concern not only the visual arts but also poetry. It should be remembered that Neoplatonism had rescued traditional poetry after its (alleged) condemnation by Plato, for Proklos regarded it again as a way to superior knowledge in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic* (IV-V). Proklos speaks of three kinds of poetry, namely, inspired, didactic and mimetic poetry, the first of which was able to provide a supra rational knowledge and enlightened the mortal soul through metaphysical truths<sup>14</sup>. This division allowed Proklos an explanation of why Plato condemned traditional poetry: only the mimetic one or, rather, the one based on a wrong mimesis. But not the two other types of poetry, didactic and inspired. Of course, inspired poetry is much superior and it is the basis of Neoplatonic claims that poetry could promote a special contact with the divine world, following an interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus* 245a. Inspired poetry makes available an indirect knowledge of the divine world through the use of allegorical interpretation: even a traditional poet such as Hesiod could be considered thus divine if his verses are read allegorically<sup>15</sup>. The comparison of poetic allegories and metaphors with the language of the Mysteries, allowed only

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g. *Enn.* 4.3.11.

<sup>13</sup> See the edition of Smith 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Sheppard 1980, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Marzillo 2010.

to initiates who can decipher its supreme knowledge, must be mentioned here. So a key aspect of a future research on Late Roman and Early Byzantine poets should pay particular attention to an analysis of allegorical resources and Neoplatonic vocabulary in order to gain new perspectives on the ideological background of the authors.

Finally, we should point out the special relevance for Christian poetry of this Neoplatonic interpretation. As it is well known, early Christian education and theology followed antique models for literature, even if they were also important to pagan traditions. Christian authors accomplished an extraordinary adaptation of classical tradition for their own purposes, including the metaphorical and allegorical interpretation of Neoplatonic aesthetics applied to pagan traditions. After a period of open challenge with Hellenism, some forms of cultural dialogue with those pagan traditions, as well as a progressive adoption of classical modes, were opened in Christianity in the Eastern Empire, and especially in regions such as Anatolia, Egypt or Syria where, on the one hand, pagan traditions were firmly rooted until relatively late<sup>16</sup>, but, on the other, extraordinary Christian authors, who had learned under pagan masters, achieved some of the highest peaks of Christian literature, such as the Cappadocian Fathers<sup>17</sup>. Christianity built upon the Greek *παιδεία* an impressive edifice of learning and theology adapting philosophy, especially Neoplatonic, and all the literary genres, with a certain predilection for poetry<sup>18</sup>. Thus, there was a blossoming of Christian production in different literary adaptations of classical rhetoric and poetics, speeches or letters, and of genres such as history, biography, novel, etc. As for poetry, it is well known that Christian authors cultivated it in all its forms<sup>19</sup>, from lyric to dramatic, as the examples of the hymns of Gregory of Nazianzos, the poems of Pseudo-Dionysios or the later *Christus Patiens* show. Epic, however, and also hexametric poetry as the favourite form of Late Antiquity which is attested, for instance, in oracular poetry, was undoubtedly the most suitable genre for the Christian message<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Rémondon 1952.

<sup>17</sup> Louth 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. Piñero 1984 and 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Den Boeft and Hilhorst 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Agosti 2001a.

### 3. A Neoplatonic *maître de poésie*?

In this context and in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, which was a decisive time of change and confrontation between paganism and Christianity, we are of the opinion that the poet Nonnos of Panopolis could be studied as a symbol of a new learned allegorical epic approach. In point of fact, he authored an extensive Christian epic that, following pagan models, shows deep theological and philosophical implications: the *Paraphrase* of the Gospel of St. John. Nonnos appears to have flourished between 450 and 470 before the time of the historian and poet Agathias, who mentions him as one of the “new poets”<sup>21</sup>. His *Dionysiaka* consists of a long mythological epic poem in Homeric style narrating Dionysos’ deeds, and includes all kinds of literary tributes to diverse genres, as well as numerous allusions to ancient cults and philosophy. His *Paraphrase* contains daring metaphors, epic vocabulary and Dionysiac references alluding to Christ, the Apostles or the Virgin Mary, no doubt in order to ennoble or allegorise the “simple” language of the Gospel. And there are contested references to Christianity in his pagan work which, according to Pierre Chuvin “seems to me to be intelligible only in the context of what remained in his time of classical polytheism”<sup>22</sup>. We can be certain today that the *Paraphrase*, an epic poem in the distinctive hexameter of Nonnos that versifies loyally the Fourth Gospel, was written under the strong influence of the theological debates of this epoch<sup>23</sup>, but adopting at the same time literary models from pagan literature<sup>24</sup>. Its composition should be dated after 431, slightly earlier than his massive Dionysiac epic in forty-eight books, or perhaps contemporary<sup>25</sup>.

Both the *Paraphrase* and the *Dionysiaka* are surely influenced by the allegorical interpretations of the Neoplatonists. In Nonnos, the structure of the whole is reflected in every part, as in a mirror, and for the case of the pagan-oriented *Dionysiaka* we have already proposed a possible application of the Neoplatonic aesthetics as a category of analysis<sup>26</sup>. Already at the beginning of the *Paraphrase*, a sort of hymn to the Logos

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<sup>21</sup> *Historiae* 4.23.5. See the introduction of Vian 1976, XVI-XVIII.

<sup>22</sup> Chuvin 1994, 175.

<sup>23</sup> Nonnos probably follows the Council of Ephesus (431) and is influenced by Cyril of Alexandria, who commented St. John’s Gospel around 425-428, cf. Livrea 1989, 21-35.

<sup>24</sup> Hernández de la Fuente 2011a.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Vian 1976 for the most widely accepted explanation of this chronology.

<sup>26</sup> Hernández de la Fuente 2014.

with Neoplatonic resonances makes it obvious that we do not face a mere poetical version of the Gospel, but rather a philosophical reading of it<sup>27</sup>. Let us just briefly consider its first lines focused on the Logos and the “intelligible light” (νοερὸν φῶς) derived from it (*Par.* I 1-22):

Ἄχρονος ἦν, ἀκίχητος, ἐν ἀρρήτῳ λόγος ἀρχῆ,  
 ἰσοφυῆς γενετῆρος ὁμήλικος υἱὸς ἀμήτωρ,  
 καὶ λόγος αὐτοφύτιο θεοῦ γόνος, ἐκ φάεος φῶς·  
 πατρὸς ἔην ἀμέριστος, ἀτέρμονι σύνθρονος ἔδρη·  
 καὶ θεὸς ὑψιγένεθλος ἔην λόγος. οὗτος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς  
 ἀνάω συνέλαμπε θεῶ, τεχνήμονι κόσμου,  
 πρεσβύτερος κόσμοιο· καὶ ἔπλετο πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ,  
 ἄπνοα καὶ πνειοντα· καὶ ἐργοπόνου δίχα μύθου  
 οὐδὲν ἔφν, τόπερ ἔσκε· καὶ ἔμφυτος ἦεν ἐν αὐτῷ  
 ζωὴ πασιμέλουσα, καὶ ὠκυμόρων φάος ἀνδρῶν  
 ζωὴ πάντροφος ἦεν. ἐν ἀχλυδέντι δὲ κόσμῳ  
 οὐρανίαις σελάγιζε βολαῖς γαιήοχος αἴγλη,  
 καὶ ζόφος οὗ μιν ἔμαρψε. μελισσοβότῳ δ' ἐνὶ λόχμῳ  
 ἔσκε τις οὐρεσίφοιτος ἐρημάδος ἀστὸς ἐρίπνης,  
 κήρυξ ἀρχεγόνου βαπτίσματος· οὐνομα δ' αὐτῷ  
 θεῖος Ἰωάννης λαοσσόος. οὗτος ἐπέστη  
 ἄγγελος ἐμπεδόμυθος, ὅπως περὶ φωτὸς ἐνίψη  
 μαρτυρίην, ἵνα πάντες ἐνὸς κήρυκος ἰωῆ  
 ὀρθὴν πίστιν ἔχοιεν, ἀτέρμονα μητέρα κόσμου·  
 οὐ μὲν κεῖνος ἔην νοερὸν φάος, ἀλλ' ἵνα μόνον  
 πᾶσιν ἀναπτύξειε θεηγόρον ἀνθερεῶνα  
 καὶ φάεος προκέλευθος ἀκηρύκτοιο φανείη...

'Ere time, 'ere space, 'ere speech dwelt the archaic Word,  
 God's like in age and nature, motherless, this Son,  
 The Word, the spawn of self-born God, light come from light,  
 Unseparate, interminable and enthroned  
 With God, consealed on God's sempiternal chair:  
 The Word was God's first offspring. Who from the beginning  
 Compiled with God, the universal architect,  
 (Himself far older than the world); and all that is,  
 Inert and breathing, all through him arose. And naught  
 Which is, but through this workman's word was made. In him,  
 Innate, was every life; his light was nourishment  
 For short-lived men. The earth-sustaining light of glory  
 Flamed bolts into the murk from heav'n above, and lo,  
 The dark could not enfold it. From a bosky lair

<sup>27</sup> Gelzer 1993, 45.

Where bees do suck, came one, a lonely citizen  
 Of rocky crags, a mountain roaming wanderer,  
 And herald of the ancient baptism; his name  
 Was John, a godly rouser of the crowd. He came  
 As messenger, as steadfast preacher, as reproach  
 To mortal men, so that, called by his herald's cry,  
 All might believe in God, creator of the world.  
 Though not himself the intelligible Light, yet still he was  
 A God-filled mouth who preached to all who came,  
 Forerunner, bringing secret, hidden Light to light,  
 And testifying to the God-receptive crowd... (English Translation, Prost  
 2003, with modifications)

At least at the level of literary expression, we can find traces of Late Antique philosophy in this Christian epic<sup>28</sup>. Although Nonnos' allegorical intention is still unclear, Neoplatonism seems a key issue for the shaping of it, and this poet could be considered a parallel case to that of the Neoplatonist Synesios of Cyrene, pupil of Hypatia of Alexandria and bishop of Ptolemais. No doubt Nonnos opened a path for the adoption of Neoplatonic models in Christian poetry and his revolutionary allegorical style would be often imitated by other epic poets not only in the following 200 years, but as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the so-called "Nonnian" poets<sup>29</sup> lived until, at least, the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, and we can count among them names such as Kyros of Panopolis<sup>30</sup>, Pamprepios of Panopolis, Musaios, Kollouthos, Paulos Silentiarios, Ioannes Gazaos, Christodoros of Koptos or Dioskoros of Aphrodito. All of them wrote in a context of rhetorical, grammatical or philosophical schools, lived at the boundaries of the Eastern Empire and enjoyed a certain geographical and social mobility<sup>31</sup>. Nonnos' verses were also read and studied in Late Antique Egypt as reference school texts, alongside Homer, Menander or Euripides, as some papyri seem to show<sup>32</sup>, demonstrating an almost immediate success of the *Dionysiaka* and the *Paraphrase* in a wide audience of the Eastern Roman Empire. And this implied, of course, that Nonnos was

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<sup>28</sup> V. gr., in the scene of the foot-washing of the disciples, see Greco 2004, 20.

<sup>29</sup> A category coined by Keydell (1931) in a section of his article in the *Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* called "Nonnos und die Nonnianer".

<sup>30</sup> According to Cameron 1982, 239, but this is still *sub iudice*.

<sup>31</sup> See the classical expression "wandering poets" in Cameron 1965.

<sup>32</sup> Treu 1996.

thoroughly imitated in metrics, style and vocabulary, even to the extent of plagiarising whole verses<sup>33</sup>.

#### 4. A Rhetorical or Philosophical “School” of Poetry?

The so-called “School of Nonnos” should be taken briefly into consideration now. Let us say that this term has created some scholarly controversy, whose peak was an excellent study of Greek Poetry in Late Antique Egypt by Laura Miguélez Caveró published in 2008. The book provided an in-depth discussion of “The so-called school of Nonnos in the literary context of Panopolis (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c. AD)”, as one of its chapters is entitled. Miguélez Caveró argued there for the non-existence of a “School of Nonnos” attributing the Egyptian “poetic flourishing” not exclusively to Nonnos. On the basis of a previous background of strong rhetorical training, typical of Late Antique Poetry, from at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE onwards, she examines Nonnos’ oeuvre and some poems of the so-called Nonnians in relation to a series of rhetorical motives or exercises (*encomium*, *ethopoea*, *ekphrasis*, *paraphrase*, etc.). The wide panorama of social, cultural and literary environments of the Thebaid, where some of these poets were trained, shows beyond any doubt the importance of local “secondary schools”, where many *γραμματικοί* were also creators of high culture in a progressively Christianised milieu, such as in Panopolis. Although Nonnos’ poetical oeuvre “did not emerge in a thematic vacuum” (Miguélez Caveró, 2008, 22) and demonstrates the solid cultural context of the Thebaid and the exhaustive rhetorical education so typical of Late Antiquity, that does not seem enough to play down Nonnos’ significance as a literary model, as the aforementioned list of poets who imitated him in detail goes to show.

It is evident that the expression “School of Nonnos” does not refer by any means to “a certain number of poets whose purpose surely was not to create a group” of whom Nonnos would be the “*caposcuola*” (*ead.* 2008, 5, 189), but rather to a “school” understood as a “group of artists, philosophers, etc. sharing similar ideas, methods, or style” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In the first strict sense of “school”, as learning institution, it is evident that a school of rhetoric where Egyptian poets learned side by side Nonnian lyrics under the direction of the *maître de poésie* Nonnos never existed as such. There are indeed many other similar artificially coined classifications, such as, “Second Sophistic”, “Third

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. e.g. Gelzer 1975, 298.



Sophistic” or, more evidently, as we will comment later, the “School of Gaza”. As Daria Gigli has shown, this “School of Nonnos” must not be clearly understood as a school in a rhetorical or in a self-conscious scholarly sense, but rather in a historical-literary way, that is to say, “un gruppo di poeti che si richiamano in modo più o meno evidente ai dettami stilistici e mettrici dell’autore”<sup>34</sup>

The Neoplatonic aesthetic of Nonnos and his poetic *poikilia* in his treatment of myths has exerted a deep influence during the following two centuries, and especially in the rhetorical subgenre of the *ekphrasis* or description. The strict rules of the Nonnian hexameter were quite successful in the first Byzantine poetry<sup>35</sup>, in a hard competition with the iambic verses and, especially, Byzantine dodecasyllables, a verse form consisting of twelve syllables and stemming from the iambic trimetre used in ancient Greek<sup>36</sup>. Not only the taste of the time played against the learned allegorical and philosophical hexameters represented by the Nonnian School, also the evolution of the language and metrics. For the Byzantines, the hexameter verse, as A. Cameron has put it, “did not sound like verse at all”<sup>37</sup>: by 491-518 Marianos of Eleutheropolis, for example, wrote popular paraphrases in iambic verses of the hexametric poems of Callimachus and Apollonios Rhodios<sup>38</sup>. One could even argue that Nonnos’ influence and style preserved the hexameter in Byzantium for some centuries still. There are many traces of Nonnian influence in poems without attribution, anonymous epigrams, inscriptions and fragments, which are difficult to date. Some Christian epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology* (I 49) look like a patchwork of the *Dionysiaka* (XXV 530 and 535) and Rudolf Keydell noticed many other examples of unknown date, but with undeniable Nonnian influence (AP I 10 , I 119, etc.). On the one hand, Nonnos’ imitators were especially keen on the literary technique of verse inscriptions and epitaphs, abundant in the *Dionysiaka*<sup>39</sup>, in hexametrical verse and we count on many examples of such imitations in real inscriptions<sup>40</sup>. On the other, the *ekphrasis* was a genre dear to the Nonnians – the deep influence of Nonnos’ poetical and allegorical technique

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<sup>34</sup> Gigli 2008, 83.

<sup>35</sup> A summary in Keydell 1959, I, 35-42.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Maas 1903.

<sup>37</sup> Cameron 1965, 482.

<sup>38</sup> Agosti 2001b.

<sup>39</sup> Schulze 1974.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Dion. XLVII 53, cf. Peek 1955 469-70.

is self-evident<sup>41</sup>. In fact, we know by references and quotations in the Suda and other sources that most Nonnians wrote allegorical epics, although only a few poems have survived. In chronological order, we should mention first Christodoros of Koptos and his long poetic description of the statues in the gymnasium of Zeuxippos, in Constantinople. Secondly, Paulos Silentiarios wrote two *ekphraseis* devoted to the erection of the church of Hagia Sophia in the Eastern capital. Thirdly we must mention Ioannes Gazaios, who flourished under Justinian and followed the descriptive technique of Nonnos celebrating in his verses the cosmological frescoes of the public baths of his hometown.

## 5. Some allegorical poets of Byzantium

The second book of the Palatine Anthology includes an *ekphrasis* of the statues in the gymnasium of Zeuxippos by the Egyptian poet Christodoros of Koptos<sup>42</sup>. He probably belonged to a generation that could have still had a strong pagan education<sup>43</sup>, for a lost work attributed to him was a collection of memorabilia from the school of Proklos. This lost work in verse could be ascribed to a tradition of poetic paraphrases of biographies of Neoplatonic sages, versified in order to spread their philosophical doctrine to a wider audience, as the hexameter oracle regarding Plotinus in Porphyry's *Vit. Plot.* 22 recalls<sup>44</sup>. This tendency can be also related to the general interest of philosophical schools in commentaries, compilations and doxography, but not in the creation of new philosophical theories.

Christodoros' *ekphrasis* could be compared to the allegorical views of Porphyry's *Περί ἀγαλμάτων*. In any case, the descriptive vocabulary typical of Nonnos is very remarkable: the statues seem to be alive and there are many metaphors for artistic representation with verbs meaning weave or tear<sup>45</sup>, etc. Some of these allegorical instruments are used by Christodoros<sup>46</sup> in accordance with the new spirit of Neoplatonic aesthetics. His *ekphrasis* of the statues of poets, orators and philosophers is reminiscent of the description of famous prophets from ancient times, and

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. e.g. frag. 39 Heitsch.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Miguélez Cavero 2008, 31ff.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Liebeschütz 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Agosti 2009.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Sánchez Ariles 2000.

<sup>46</sup> 35, cf. D. XXIII 14, XXIV 158; 39 cf. D. XLVII 117; 111 cf. D. I 57, IV 18, V 186, XLVI 125, etc., 245 cf. D. XV 93, XXV 535, XXVI 114, etc.

their figures are referred to as those of creative and inspired wise men (νοεροί σοφοί) staring at the sky in deep meditation. In contrast to the traditional Greek *ekphrasis* of works of art praising the artists, Christodoros' syntax, as Kaldellis has stated "tends to attribute the hints of what the statues might be thinking, feeling, and saying to those who are being represented and not to the skill of their craftsmen"<sup>47</sup>. Especially interesting is the typology of inspired and divine poets, following the Neoplatonic consideration of poetry as a way of knowledge: Hesiod's statue, for example, is described in 38-40 "resounding" with Bacchic frenzy and singing an ἔνθεον melody, or a θεϊός Homeric one (311ff.). Most striking, however, are, of course, the descriptions of statues of philosophers: Aristoteles' description, for example, as a "prince of wisdom" described with mantic vocabulary (16-22):

Ἄγχι δ' ἐκείνου  
 ἦεν Ἀριστοτέλης, σοφίης πρόμος· ἰστάμενος δὲ  
 χεῖρε περιπλέγδην συνεέργαθεν· οὐδ' ἐνὶ χαλκῷ  
 ἀφθόγγῳ φρένας εἶχεν ἀεργέας, ἀλλ' ἔτι βουλήν  
 σκεπτομένῳ μὲν ἔικτο, συνιστάμεναι δὲ παρειαί  
 ἀνέρος ἀμφιέλισσαν ἐμαντεύοντο μενοινήν  
 καὶ τροχαλαὶ σήμαινον ἀολλέα μῆτιν ὄπωπαί.

And near him was Aristotle, the prince of Wisdom: he stood with clasped hands, and not even in the voiceless bronze was his mind idle, but he was like one deliberating; his puckered face indicated that he was solving some doubtful problem, while his mobile eyes revealed his collected mind. (English translation, Paton 1916)

Of course θεοείκελος Platon (97-101), "who erst in Athens revealed the secret paths of heaven-taught virtue", and Pythagoras (120-123) are the main figures of this series, the latter in parallel to some interesting Late Antique iconographical evidence. There is, for instance, a relief of Pythagoras in what could have been a philosophical school of Aphrodisias<sup>48</sup>. Pythagoras, a founding father for later Neoplatonists, is one of these "intelligible" wise men, who even seem to "force" the bronze to express his supreme thoughts:

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<sup>47</sup> Kaldellis 2007, 367.

<sup>48</sup> Joost-Gaugier 2007, 142.

Ἰστάμενος δὲ  
 ἔπρεπε Πυθαγόρης, Σάμιος σοφός, ἀλλ' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ  
 ἐνδιάειν ἐδόκευε, φύσιν δ' ἐβιάζετο χαλκοῦ  
 πλημύρων νοερῆσι μεληδόσιν· ὥς γὰρ οἴω,  
 οὐρανὸν ἀγράντοισιν ἐμέτρεε μόνον ὀπωπαῖς.

There stood, too, Pythagoras the Samian sage, but he seemed to dwell in Olympus, and did violence to the nature of the bronze, overflowing with intellectual thought, for methinks with his pure eyes he was measuring Heaven alone. (English translation, Paton 1916, with modifications).

We must underline the usage of *noeros* in comparison with the idea of “intelligible inspiration” of the *Hymn to the Muses* by Proklos (10–11):

ἀλλά, θεαί, καὶ ἐμεῖο πολυπτοίητον ἐρωῆν  
 παύσατε καὶ νοεοῖς με σοφῶν βακχεύσατε μύθοις.

Come now, Goddesses, put an end to my turbulent impulse  
 and infuse a sacred frenzy into me through the noetic words of the wise.  
 (English Translation in Gigli 2014, 405)

Finally, Pherekydes is described by Christodoros as well following the Neoplatonic ideal of the wise man contemplating the heavens (352-5: “Plying the holy compasses of wisdom, he was gazing at the heavens, his eyes turned upwards.”). This naturally recalls the idea of the wise man tending to the ὁμοίωσις θεῶ in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (176a5-c): the philosopher gazes at the heavens and tries to elevate himself away from our material reality “as fast as possible” (176a9).

Our next poet is Paulos Silentiarios, a member of the imperial bureaucracy living under Justinian. Paulos is best known as an epigrammatic poet, but he also wrote two important poetic descriptions of this kind<sup>49</sup>. Firstly, the one of the church of Hagia Sophia consists of 1029 verses, most hexameters after the first 134 iambic verses. Secondly, he wrote a description of the altar of Hagia Sophia in 304 verses (29 iambic and the rest hexameters). His poetic work shows the growing preference for blank verse in Greek literature and the characteristic combination of iambic and hexameter meters of his time. Regarding the contents, of course, an abundance of Christian allegories in traditional descriptions is

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Patrologia Graeca* 86.2, 2119-2158 and the old but useful edition of Friedländer 1912, now replaced by De Stefani 2011.

to be noticed, and any research on the possible Neoplatonic themes must be related to the *ekphrastic* use of the ideas of circularity and circular motion, as we have already shown in the case of Nonnos<sup>50</sup>: circularity is considered in Plotinus a way of continuity between the two worlds, sensible and intelligible, and between body and in the allegorical description of divine beings defended by Porphyry, “circularity belongs to eternity” (*Περί ἀγαλμάτων*, fr. 2, Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3, 7). Paul’s descriptions of the sacred space of Hagia Sophia show abundant circular metaphors and adjectives parallel to the rich Nonnian vocabulary related to the circles in the cosmological *ekphraseis* of both the *Dionysiaka* and the *Paraphrase*. A detailed study on Paul’s view of circularity and the circular motion as a symbol of sacred space and divine contemplation could throw new light upon our subject. As Nicoletta Isar has pointed out “Paul’s vision of concentric circles of light reiterates Plotinus’ pattern of creation of the world as an emanation of luminous source increasingly wider, and Proclus’ vision of the dance movement (*chorós*) circularly.”<sup>51</sup> The contemplation of such beauty leads the mortal soul, as in the Neoplatonic aesthetics, to a higher or “noetic” knowledge of metaphysical truths (*Descr. S. Soph.* 806-809), even to a paradoxical “sun in the night”, a well-known symbol in mystical visions:

Πάντα μὲν ἀγλαΐῃ καταειμένα, πάντα νοήσεις  
 ὄμμασι θάμβος ἄγοντα· φασφορίην δὲ λιγαίνειν  
 ἑσπερίην οὐ μῦθος ἐπάρκιος· ἡ τάχα φαίης  
 ἐννύχιον Φαέθοντα καταυγάζειν σέβας οἴκου.

Thus is everything clothed in beauty; everything fills the eye with wonder.  
 But no words are sufficient to describe the illumination in the evening: you  
 might say that some nocturnal sun filled the majestic temple with light.  
 (English Translation in Mango 1986, 89)

A detailed description of the lighting of the church follows (810-920) that contains numerous symbolic allusions to Platonism. His description of both the ambo of Hagia Sophia, situated at the very central axis of the cosmological circularity of the church, and the concentric circles of light inside, as Isar (2006) has studied, dwells heavily on notions of circular motion that can be traced back to Plato’s *Timaeus* (34a-b) and show some

<sup>50</sup> Hernández de la Fuente 2011b.

<sup>51</sup> Isar 2006, 75.

interesting parallels with the Neoplatonic mystical way towards the contemplation of divinity (Plot. *Enn.* IV 8 1, Porphy. *Vit. Plot.* 22-23).

The next poet is Ioannes Gazaios, living as well in the age of Justinian, belongs to the celebrated School of Gaza, from the late fifth to the sixth century, a school not only of rhetoric, as in the case of Prokopios, Chorikios and other figures<sup>52</sup>. Gaza was a flourishing cultural centre in Late Antiquity<sup>53</sup>, not only due to rhetoric, but also to philosophy, as the School of Gaza was founded by Aeneas as a “an offshoot of the great school of Alexandria, with a prominent Christian membership educated in Platonism”<sup>54</sup>. It was, as Aeneas of Gaza put it, the “new Attica”<sup>55</sup>. In this context, our poet, Ioannes Gazaios, would be first and foremost a follower of the poetic descriptive technique of Nonnos. But he obviously received as well a philosophical education, perhaps also in Alexandria, and represents the best specimen of Neoplatonic allegorist of this series of authors. His *ekphrasis* of the frescoes at the ceiling of the baths of Gaza consists of a fascinating mixture of the classical “pagan” *Leitmotiven* with allusions to the theological discussions of his time, such as the Miaphysite controversy. The text and critical apparatus of the edition of Ioannes Gazaios by Friedlander (1912) shows a deep Nonnian influence (e.g. 299, cf. *Dionysiaka* XXIX 303 and II 451) and a clear preference for Neoplatonic vocabulary, epithets and formulas as νοερὸν φῶς or αὐτοτέλεστος, in the allegorical interpretation of the cosmos, which can be found in the iambic and hexametric verses of his *Tabula mundi* and the description of Sophia and Arete (e.g. 1.87-95)<sup>56</sup>. Let us briefly see how John describes an angel at the frescoes, 1.307-310.

φύλαξ δέ τις Ὠκεανοῖο  
 Ἀγγελικῆς στρατιῆς πτερόεις ἀνέτειλεν ἀβύσσου  
 υἱέος οὐρανοῦ τεκμήρια χειρὶ κομίζων,  
 ἀρρήτου σοφίης νοερὸν ξύλον ἔμφορος ὄζου.

...Ocean's winged guardian, belonging to the angelical host, rises from the abyss, –in his hands he brings the symbol of the celestial son, the noetic wood, the intelligible branch of unspeakable wisdom (English translation in Gigli 2011, with modifications)

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<sup>52</sup> Penella 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2004 and Saliou 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Wear 2013

<sup>55</sup> Aeneas of Gaza, Ep. 18 Massa Positano.

<sup>56</sup> Gigli Piccardi 2011 and 2014.

As in the case of Christodoros, we are far from the traditional Greek *ekphrasis* of a Philostratos, underlining the skill of the artists, and there is an insistence of the aesthetic experience as an almost mystical way leading to the contemplation of the divine: the Platonic and Neoplatonic ideological background of this poet is very remarkable and, as Daria Gigli points out, “we are rather closer to the *πóvoς* of the ‘delivery in the beauty’ of Plato’s *Symposium* (212a) [and] to the pains that human soul suffers in the *unio mystica* with the One, as underlined by Plotinus”<sup>57</sup>. So much for sixth century poetry.

## 6. The last of the Nonnians (but not of the Neoplatonists)

The poetic production of the following century was characterised by an abrupt change in comparison with that of the previous century. After a remarkable flourishing, the eulogies, descriptions and epigrams of the age of Justinian and Justin II would almost disappear. The general tendency shows a growing predominance of sacred themes in the Byzantine poetry and a decadence of secular poetry. The Byzantine schools of rhetoric and philosophy were naturally affected by the fall of the learned regions of Syria, Palestine or Egypt into the hands of the Persians, firstly, and of the Arabs later. Gaza or Alexandria suffered this convulse time of war and change (needless to mention the definitive destruction of the Alexandrian Library). That is why the reign of Phokas, with the first civil war of the Byzantine era, and, above all, the reign of Herakleios and the 7<sup>th</sup> century mark a dramatic caesura in the cultural history of the Eastern Empire. Late Antique literary tradition, as we have understood it so far, and especially the deeply philosophical poetic school represented by Nonnos and his followers, would enter into an unprecedented period of decadence<sup>58</sup>. We could consider this epoch as the time of birth of medieval Byzantine poetry strictly speaking, as the iambic poems will gain acceptance in comparison with the decadent hexametric poetry, representing an older aesthetic approach. As De Stefani has argued, this time can be “considered a crucial moment for the decline of “Nonnian” hexameter poetry and, at the same time, an event which laid the foundations for Byzantine poetic output”<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Gigli Piccardi 2014, 410.

<sup>58</sup> De Stefani 2014.

<sup>59</sup> De Stefani 2014, 377-8.

In this context we should mention our last poet, George of Pisidia, deacon and Chartophylax at the church of Hagia Sophia and official poet at the court of Emperor Herakleios. His verses were famous at his time and both his eulogies as well as his inspired philosophical verses deeply impressed scholars during the later Byzantine period (e.g. Michael Psellos). He was a very important witness of the time to understand Byzantine ideology behind literature. As a member of the hierarchy of Hagia Sophia, and as a courtesan, he still wrote some relics of the already old-fashioned hexameter poetry<sup>60</sup> in Nonnian fashion and some other poems with a strong Neoplatonic philosophical background. Most of his surviving poems are eulogies in iambic trimeters to the emperor and his campaigns against the Persians and Avars or theological poems like the *Hexaemeron*, an account of the creation of the universe by God the Father in 1910 iambic trimeters. This poem shows a very remarkable influence of the tradition of Christian Neoplatonism, especially that of Pseudo-Dionysios and of the negative theology, and addresses directly the alleged head of the Pagan Neoplatonism, the very Proklos, in a very interesting passage (60-5, 77-8):

Ἄλλ' ὦ σοφιστὰ Πρόκλε τῶν κάτω λόγων,  
 ὁ πολλὰ βροντῶν ἐκ νεφῶν λοξοδρόμων,  
 ὁ πτωχίκομος τῶν νοημάτων σάλος,  
 ὁ πολλὰ τολμῶν εἰς αἶδιον κτίσιν,  
 διδοὺς δὲ ποινὰς εἰς ἀπλήρωτον κρίσιν  
 ἄκουε μικρῶν συλλαβῶν κράτος μέγα [...]  
 Ἄλλ' ὦ σοφιστὰ τῶν ξενοσπόρων λόγων,  
 ἄκουε λοιπόν, μηδὲ κομπάσης ὅτι  
 σοῦ τὴν ἀφορμὴν τοῦ σκοτοῦ δεδωκότος  
 σιγῶσι Πρόκλοι καὶ λαλοῦσιν ἀγρόται.

“And you, o Proklos, skilled master of earthly words, you thunder much from the top of torturing running clouds, you storm miserably with vainglorious thoughts, you who dare to support the eternity of the world, deserving for this the punishment of an unquenchable judgment, listen to the great strength of the small syllables [...] Now listen, o wise master of strange doctrines and do not endeavour so much, because since you have procured an opportunity for [our] aim all the Proklos are silent and the rustic speak.” (Translation mine based on Tartaglia 1998)

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<sup>60</sup> PG 92.1195-1754. Cf. Ludwig 1991, Gonnelli 1998, Pertusi 1959.



Here George of Pisidia criticises Proklos' thought for defending the eternity of the world, against the Christian idea of divine creation, and for being excessively confident in "worldly reasons". As Nodes has pointed out, "what is wrong with Proklos, in George's view, is an excessive confidence in theurgy and science as capable of reading the metaphysical code embedded in nature and making the ascent without the benefit of Christian revelation. The *Theologia platonica* that Proklos developed from the doctrines of his predecessors of the Academy attempts to ascend through the hierarchy of the universe by a series of dialectical stages, starting with nature, but in the end using pure reason."<sup>61</sup> However, and paradoxically, this poem by the Pisidian is at the same time largely influenced by Neoplatonic theology. Indeed, the notion of negative theology displayed in the *Hexaemeron*, although alluded to often in Christian theology, is after all of Neoplatonic origin: the human understanding is not capable of comprehending the divine One and can only try to apprehend it through negative definitions. All the *Hexaemeron* is deeply marked by the Neoplatonic patterns of the ontological hierarchy from Heaven to the humanity and the material world. The same happens, in our view, with the Neoplatonic aesthetics we have alluded to. Let us see the very beginning of the poem, addressed to Patriach Sergios:

Ὡ παντὸς ἔργου καὶ θεηγόρου λόγου  
καὶ γλῶσσα καὶ νοῦς καὶ τροφή καὶ καρδία,  
τὰ ρεῖθρα τῶν σῶν οὐρανοδρόμων λόγων,  
εἰς τὴν ἀνικμον ἐμβαλὼν μου καρδίαν·  
αὐχμῶ γὰρ ἤδη τοῦ κατασχόντος ζόφου  
ἄφωνον εἶχον ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ στόμα,  
τῆς τοῦ λόγου σάλπιγγος ἐμπεφραγμένης.  
οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως ὡς ἀθυμίας νέφος  
χειμῶνα γεννᾷ καὶ νοημάτων ζάλην  
καὶ συσκιάζει τοῦ λόγου τὸν ἥλιον  
καὶ νύκτα ποιεῖ γνωστικῆς ἀβλεψίας  
καὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ συνθολοῖ τοὺς ἀστέρας,  
ἐσω δὲ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀχλὺν τῶν φροντίδων  
καὶ τὴν ὀμίχλην τῶν φρενῶν ὑποστρέφει  
καὶ τῆς διόπτρας τὴν ὀπὴν ἀντιστρέφει,  
δι' ἧς τὰ μικρὰ τοῦ λόγου κινήματα  
ὁ νοῦς θεωρεῖ γνωστικῶν ἐξ ὀργάνων.

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<sup>61</sup> Nodes 1996, 276-7.

“O thou who art language, mind, nourishment and heart of every work and word that speaks of God! Thou that pourest in my arid heart the currents of your speech running through the spaces of heavens! The dark smile of which I was a prey constrained my mouth to silence, because it was blocked by the whirlwind that breathes the word: nothing more in the cloud of discouragement generates storm and tornados in thoughts, obscuring the sun of eloquence. It produces the night of speculative blindness, obscuring the stars of reasoning, causing in the soul the impetuous vortex of the whole fog of concerns that obscures the mind, changing the meatus of the dioptra through which the intellect, with the aid of the organs of knowledge, perceives the small movements of reason” (Translation mine based on Tartaglia 1998)

The “intelligible” vocabulary and the allusions to circularity and the light of knowledge could indicate an influence of the Neoplatonic allusive level we have pointed out from Nonnos onwards. Additionally, there are, nonetheless, some relics of hexametric poetry by George of Pisidia: ninety verses in Nonnian style that were found in a Paris manuscript<sup>62</sup> and deal philosophically with the futility of human existence, indeed in a troubled time like the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This poem, known as *De vita humana*, was commented for the first time by Leo Sternbach in 1893 and, after a thorough analysis of the metric and of the style, he wrote a study on the Pisidian entitled indisputably (and, in a way, programmatically) *De Georgio Pisida Nonni sectatore*<sup>63</sup>. He was indeed the last strict follower of the School of Nonnus, in spite of further receptions of this kind of poetry with Neoplatonic influences, which must still be fully researched<sup>64</sup>. In 1991 Fabrizio Gonnelli published a new edition of this only surviving work in hexameters with Italian translation and philological commentary<sup>65</sup> and there is an English translation of the hexameters by M. Whitby, who pointed out the allegorical style and the deep spirituality of his short poem<sup>66</sup>, whose examination goes beyond the scope of the present paper and shall be postponed for a future research.

In any case, George of Pisidia is a turning point not only in the history of literature but also in the history of mentalities. As it occurs with the case of Nonnos in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the final confrontation between paganism and Christianity, the oeuvre of the Pisidian reflects an

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<sup>62</sup> Parisinus Gr. N. 1630, ff. 165r-166r.

<sup>63</sup> Sternbach 1893, 38-54.

<sup>64</sup> Tartaglia 1998, 30-31, 448-455.

<sup>65</sup> Gonnelli 1991.

<sup>66</sup> Whitby 2014, 435-440.

ideological background marked by the emergence of new religious tendencies and by the questioning of the ideological and religious contexts of his poetry, which shows some interferences with common issues in the emerging world of Islam. His work could be analysed in order to gain new perspectives on Byzantine cultural history of 7<sup>th</sup> century, a time described by scholars, such as Peter Brown, as a crucial period in the process of transformation from the Ancient to the Medieval world. In the era of the Byzantine emperor Herakleios, who is regarded indeed as the last Late Antique ruler, the Byzantine state will undergo far-reaching reforms, losing its late Roman character in a process of Hellenization. At the same time, Greek traditional poetry was deeply transformed and the position of George of Pisidia, as the author of both of a short hexameter poem and long eulogies to the emperor in iambic verse, is very remarkable. He is at the same time the last of the Nonnians and the first poet of a new time marked by the emergence of Islam in the learned provinces of Egypt and Palestine, which, after being sees of the most important rhetorical, poetical and philosophical schools of the Eastern Empire in Late Antiquity, were to be lost forever. The switch of paradigm from the diverse, philosophical and secular poetical schools of Alexandria, the Thebaid, or Gaza to an official and ecclesiastical poetry in dodecasyllables in Constantinople – from the Many to the One, as in the Neoplatonic reversion – is the main result of this drastic solving of the rich cultural, ideological and political tension between the capital of the Eastern Empire and the rich and cultivated provinces. As the cultural level of the empire decreased, the fondness for Neoplatonic aesthetics in Greek poetry of the Byzantine period was gone for good. The style of the first Byzantine poetic school, the so-called school of Nonnos, could be then defined “ideologically” by the Neoplatonic literary taste – especially visible in the allegorical interpretations of cosmic scenes or artistic descriptions, but also in allusions to concepts of philosophy – in a Christian atmosphere, whose influence in the first Byzantine school of poetry was very remarkable and would last until the 7<sup>th</sup> century poet George of Pisidia.

### **III.**

## **FRONTIERS, PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES IN CONTACT**

# BYZANTIUM AND THE EASTERN FRONTIER

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“How, and whether, we should use ‘Arabs’, as a way of characterising the origins and true nature of any settled or urban groups in the Roman Near East is the most treacherous of all the questions which confront us.”

Millar (1993, 221).

## Introduction

We live in an era marked by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The roots of this situation are to be found in previous times, but after this attack the perception of Islam as a foreign religion and civilisation, as something alien, powerful and strange that erupted violently on the peaceful Western sky, was clearly outlined<sup>1</sup>. In Spain, this perception was already observable in the marginalisation of the Eastern heritage – Arab and Muslim, but also Hebrew – present in almost all Hispanic tradition after 1492<sup>2</sup>. One of the consequences of modern terrorism has been the creation of many chairs of Islamic, Arab and Oriental Studies, including “area studies”, in European and especially North American universities, whose results may or may not be convincing.

The distribution of Humanities follows, nevertheless, traditional patterns, i.e., some boundaries established in the nineteenth century: on the one hand, an area of Oriental Studies, dealing with the Eastern world, including Islamic countries and religion, and, on the other, the rest of the Humanities. With interesting exceptions, especially in the area of

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<sup>1</sup> The classic is, of course, the book, somewhat libellous, by Huntington 1998.

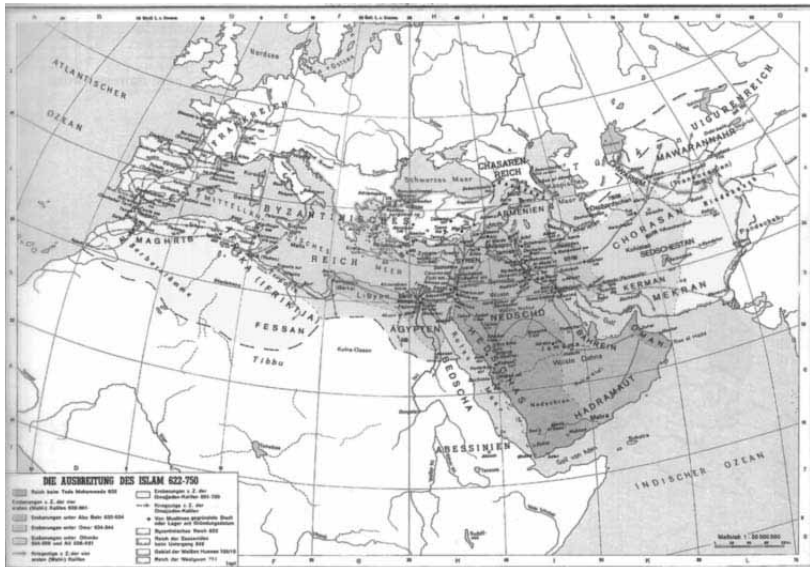
<sup>2</sup> If we compare Américo Castro's book of 1948 with the current landscape of the humanities in Spain, we can measure what has been achieved during the past decades.

Medieval studies<sup>3</sup> – including the United States of America –, the notion of the universal role of Islam in the context of ancient Mediterranean history is somewhat scarce.<sup>4</sup> This paper tries to fill the gap, in part.

## The Qur'an in the context of Late Antique history

It is not difficult to understand why such a remarkable division exists between these disciplines: aside from each one's natural limitations of intellectual capacities, what is surprising is the rapid, fulminating expansion of Islam in the course of the wars between the Muslim armies, on one side, and the Byzantine and Sassanian armies, on the other.

Figure 1: Map with expansion of Islam, Engel (1979, 71)



<sup>3</sup> Worth mentioning is the book by Schlieben 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Notable exception: the publications by Menocal, among which is worth mentioning Menocal 2009.

Let us imagine the previous world situation<sup>5</sup>, i.e. the first decades of the seventh century, when a young merchant called Muhammad belonging to the dominant family of his hometown Mecca, but to an impoverished branch of it, being an orphan (or of unclear father), grew in the home of his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. In those days and in that area of the Empire, the most important event that took place was the bloody war between Byzantium and their eternal enemies, the Persians.

Although it was no doubt an ancient enmity, inherited by each of the empires since the beginning of the takeover by the Sassanids during the twenties of the third century – even in earlier times, in the perennial conflict between Romans and Parthians – this war would develop in somewhat different directions. It took place after the assassination of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (reigned 590-602) and during the rebellion of Phokas (the last emperor who erected a monument in the Roman Forum, dated thanks to an inscription by Pope Gregory the Great), when Ḥusrōy II, Shāh of Persia who had married a Christian woman<sup>6</sup>, attempted with his vengeful campaign since 602 nothing less than the complete extinction of Persia's traditional foes. The culmination of this total war was the conquest of Jerusalem in 614, a famous event that had enormous repercussions until and throughout the Middle Ages (including the West), reported, for example, in the Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine (CXXXI 930–932 Maggioni)<sup>7</sup>. In the Holy City, the Jews had supposedly perpetrated massacres against the Christian population<sup>8</sup>. No wonder therefore we find a distant echo of that catastrophe, highly publicised throughout the Middle East, in the sura/azora number thirty of the Qur'an:

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<sup>5</sup> The most important book recently written about this subject is that of Howard-Johnston 2010: it discusses the various sources of remote origin and written in different languages, in an extraordinary, sensible and cautious way.

<sup>6</sup> His first wife, Shūrīn, which played an important role in the literary picture of the later Muslim Persian literature (“Ḥosrou or Shūrīn” by Niẓāmī), was a member of the Apostolic Oriental (“Nestorian”) Church.

<sup>7</sup> On the conquest of the Holy City see Haldon 1997, 42 f., Howard-Johnston 2010, passim (see index s.v. Jerusalem, “capture by Persians”, esp. 164ff. and s.v. “Persian occupation”, 81, 130).

<sup>8</sup> Howard-Johnston (2010), index, s.v. “Jews, Jerusalem”, and 63, 156 and 340. The last pages mentioned above are important for the change of policy by Herakleios before the conquest, e.g. the abandoning of revenge measures (that he later revoked).

Figure 2: source: [http://www.coran.org.ar/Sura\\_030\\_Pag.htm](http://www.coran.org.ar/Sura_030_Pag.htm)

Translation:

1. Alif, Lam, Meem./ 2. The Byzantines have been defeated/ 3. In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome./ 4. Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice/ 5. In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

It was during this war that the Persians abolished the traditional clientele kingdoms within their Empire, such as the Laḥmid kingdom, whose centre was the city of al-Ḥīra, and whose dynasty converted to Persian Christianity (so-called Nestorianism). The kingdom's sedentary population consisted of Christian Aramaeics, the *'ibād* (the "servants", *sc.* of Christ)<sup>9</sup>. Although within reachable distance of the Sāsānid capital,

<sup>9</sup> See the excellent monograph by Toral-Niehoff 2013; see also Toral-Niehoff 2010 and Mustafa/Tubach/Vashalomidze 2007. Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq, the star among the



Ctesiphon, the kingdom was placed in the marginal zone between the desert and the cultivated land of Iraq. The death of the last Laḥmid king by order of the Shāh, the same Ḥusrōy II, proved to be disastrous for the balance between the sedentary empires. The new system that Persian kings tried to establish after incorporating their traditional ally, partially based on the Ḡassānids, who had been allies of Byzantium before, became highly unstable. And more importantly, sources speak of a plurality of units of Arab ancestry, rather than referring to a single, or unified tribe (see below). The imperial system had developed into a much more complex one, and the Persians could not adequately respond to the situation, which was out of control. The defeat of the year 611 in Dū I - Qār (now a province -*muḥāfaẓa*- in the south of the country, near the capital of the Sumerian civilisation) marked the end of the prestige of the Sāsānide army, being defeated now against their minor allies<sup>10</sup>.

To sum up, it seems that during those years Ḥusrōy planned to annihilate once and for all the Roman Empire, an intention previously manifested by both powers that, nevertheless, had been out of reach for the leaders of either side for a long time. This war did not finish until May 628, when Emperor Herakleios issued a statement on his victory, which was read out from the pulpit of Hagia Sophia, and celebrated his triumph marching through the Golden Gate in Jerusalem in March 630, probably on 21<sup>st</sup> of the month<sup>11</sup>. It is precisely the same year of the triumphal entry of Muhammad in his hometown as a prophet, already recognised by his own family, the Qurayš, accepting parts of the ancient ritual of Mecca and incorporating them into the new – already Islamic – cult<sup>12</sup>. It is clear that

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translators in the ninth century Abbasid court († 873), was a native of this city, which was in decline at his time, because of competition with Baḡdād and other new centres of Islam.

<sup>10</sup> Howard-Johnston 2010, 368ff. and 438 with note. The issue was dealt with also in Howard-Johnston 2006, n. VI. This battle was the culmination of a negative development between Persians and Arabs, marked by the conversion of the tribal chief, Nu'man, to Eastern Christianity; see Howard-Johnston 2010, index ss. vv. "Hira" and "Nu'man" and Toral-Niehoff 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Howard-Johnston 2010, 22 and 58. See also the index s.v. St. Sophia; 24ff. and 41 (the first two chapters are focused on the two major contemporary authors, except section five and ff. in the second chapter). It is an attempt of reconstruction of the events from these two major sources, the poet of Herakleios' court, George of Pisidia and the Chronikon Paschale. A comprehensive treatment in Pertusi 1959, 230-37.

<sup>12</sup> The literature on the subject is, understandably, abundant. Besides Howard-Johnston 2010, 412ff. 456ff. (see the index s.v. "Mecca sanctuary" and "Ka'bah")

the history of Muslim conquests is an integral part of the war between Byzantium and Persia, the last war of Antiquity, as James Howard-Johnston called it<sup>13</sup>. We must therefore regard it as a topic of Ancient history in the Mediterranean world.

### **The Arabs: a tribe of Late Antiquity**

To understand these events that would change the world forever, we should also consider taking into account the results of research carried out on other tribal groups located on the margins of the Empire, the Germanic peoples. In both cases we are faced with primitive organisations that were in continuous interaction with the Roman Empire. And apart from obvious differences – the climate, the animals used for transport, the settlement structures and the level of literacy, primarily –, we find the same reactions by the Romans when facing either society. The lords of the world were quite wise and preferred indirect to direct rule, especially in places far from their centres of power.<sup>14</sup>

As we know from the works of British historian David Graf, for example, in his articles “Rome and the Defence of the Arabian Frontier” or “Rome and the Saracens”, the Romans developed a complex indirect rule system (Graf 1997, IX and X), whose main feature was the creation of allies. In other words, the Romans co-organized the tribes involved in a formation process at their borders in order to entrust them with the defence against their enemies – the Sassanids and their allies, but also the non-pacified groups of desert dwellers. With these tribes at their borders they established an alliance, a *symmachia*. At the end of the day, the creation of these tribes is due to a certain extent not to spontaneous movements among desert-dwellers, but to actions taken by their protectors (including Arabs tribes inside the Empire).

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we can mention the classical essays of Watt 1953 and 1956 [1960 and 1962], 69ff. and 307ff. of the second volume, and Neuwirth's recent book 2010, 379ff. 542ff. (on the reinterpretation of the cult inherited in Medina) which includes an extensive bibliography discussing the various approaches from different schools of Islamologists.

<sup>13</sup> As a compilation of his previous articles (2006).

<sup>14</sup> All considerations about the relationship between sedentary and nomadic peoples should start with a key book, Khazanov 1984. See also the discussion by Horden/Purcell 2000, 80ff. and the bibliographical essay in 549ff. On the relations between Germans and Romans Geary 2002 is essential, on the Visigoths, relevant in an Iberian context, we should mention Kampers 2008 and Hillgarth 2009.

We can follow Roman activities among these groups since imperial times. As an example, the famous Ruwwāfa inscriptios (Graf 1997, IX, 9ff.,)<sup>15</sup> located somewhere in Ḥismā landscape, in northwestern part of Saudi Arabia, about seventy kilometres from Tabūk:

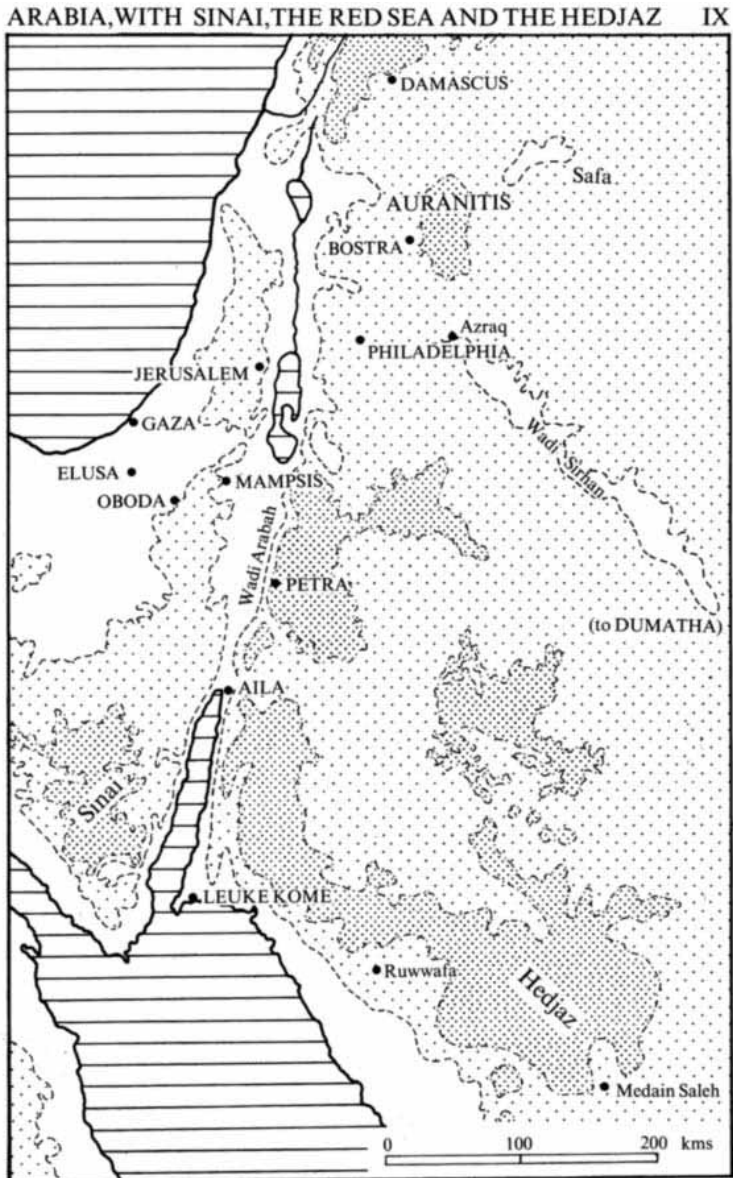
Figure 3: Ḥismā landscape in Saudi Arabia (Unknown Source)



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<sup>15</sup> See also the previous contribution in VIII, 172, 178-180 (about the Ṭamūd as precursors of the Byzantine *foederati*, 182.

Figure 4: Map of the site Ruwwāfa, from Millar (1993, p 573.)



Alois Musil, the Austro-Hungarian spy whose achievements in the field of Oriental Studies are perhaps the most remarkable, visited the site already in 1910 and interpreted the mention of Tamūd tribe as a name for an ἔθνος. After him, David Graf (1978, 1989 and 1997) and G. Bowersock (1975) worked on this bilingual inscription:

Figure 5

*Text*

A.<sup>1</sup> Ὑπὲρ αἰωνίου διαμονῆς κρατήσεως τῶν  
 θειοτάτων κοσμοκρατόρων Σεβαστῶν μεγίστων  
 Ἀρμενικῶν Μάρκου Αὐρηλίου Ἀντωνεῖνου καὶ  
 Λουκίου <sup>2</sup> Αὐρηλίου Οὐήρου πα[τέρων πατρίδος  
 τῶ]ν Θαμουδηῶν ἔ[θνος lacune d'env. 60 lettres  
 ]-ΣΤΑ καθείδρυσεν μετὰ προτρο[πῆς] <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐκ  
 πει[θοῦς? lacune d'env. 25 lettres K]οίντου  
 [Ἀντιστίου Ἀδουεντοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ Σεβαστῶν  
 ἀντιστρατήγου . . .].

B. <sup>4</sup> °L̄SLM° DY MTM[KY]N Λ[K]L [°]L[M°  
 lacune d'env. 30 lettres MRQS] °WRLYS  
 °N̄T̄WN̄YNS WLWQYS °WRLYS WRS DY  
 °RMNY° vacat DNH NWS° DY °BDT ŠRKI  
 TMWDW QDMY ŠRKTH LMHW° Š]WH MN  
 YDHM WMŠMŠH [ML°L]M<sup>5b</sup> vacat WHFYT  
 °N̄T̄T̄YS °D̄W̄NTS HGMW°N° [lacune d'env. 10  
 lettres] WRMŠHM.

C. <sup>5a</sup> Ἐπὶ νείκη καὶ αἰωνίῳ διαμονῇ αὐτοκρατόρων  
 Καισάρων [M]άρκου [Aὐ]ρηλίου Ἀντωνεῖνου °  
 καὶ Λουκίου Αὐρηλίου Οὐήρου Σεβ[αστῶν]

Figure 6: bilingual inscriptions (in Nabataean and Greek) from Ruwḡāfa Temple according to Graf (1997/1987, IX, 9 s and Bowersock (1975), with French translation of Milik cited by Graf.

Ἀρμενικῶν [Μηδ]ικῶν Παρθικῶν μεγ[ίσ]τωι  
καὶ τοῦ παντὸς οἴ[κ]ου αὐτῶν τὸ τῶν Θαμουδηνῶν  
ἔθνος νακαί.

<sup>1</sup> τὸν νεῶκιν> συνετέλεσεν <sup>2</sup> καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν  
καθειέρωσεν. <sup>1</sup> [ἐπὶ Λ(ουκίου) Κλ]αυδίου  
Μοδέστου <sup>2</sup> [πρεσβευτ(οῦ) Σεβ]β ἄντιστρατ  
(ήγου).

D. [D]NH BYT<sup>o</sup> DY BNH Š<sup>c</sup>DT<sup>o</sup> FKL<sup>o</sup> [L]H<sup>o</sup> BF  
MGYDW DY MN RBTW L<sup>o</sup>LH<sup>o</sup> [ ]<sup>o</sup> LE  
... [B]H FYT MR<sup>o</sup>N<sup>o</sup> [ ] HGMWN  
[ ]<sup>c</sup>MRW.

E. CICΘAIOI Θ [αμ]ουδηνῶν φυλῆς Ῥοβάθοι  
οἰκοδομησα τὸ εἶερὸν τοῦτο.

#### Translation

A. Pour la durée éternelle de la puissance des très divins maîtres du monde, très grands Augustes, vainqueurs des Arméniens, Marc Aurèle Antonin et Lucius Aurèle Vérous père [res de la patrie, la] nation des Thamoudéens a fondé [le temple . . .], par les soins et de par la per[suasion] . . . de Quintus [Antistius Adventus, légat des Augustes propréteur . . .]

B. pour le salut des dominateurs du monde entier, [. . . , Marc] Aurèle Antonin et Lucius Aurèle Vérous, qui sont (les vainqueurs des) Arméniens, ceci est le temple qu'a construit la fédération des Thamoudéens, (à savoir) les chefs de leur fédération, a fin que'il soit posé de leur main et que'il s'y fasse la liturgie, en le[ur faveur, à jamais]; par les soins d'Antistius Adventus, le gouverneur, [qui . . .] et a mis la paix entre eux.

C. Pour la victoire et la durée éternelle des empereurs Césars, Marc Aurèle Antonin et Lucius Aurèle Vérous, Augustes, vainqueurs des Arméniens, . . . vainqueurs des Mèdes, très grands vainqueurs des Parthes, et de leur maison toute entière, la nation des Thamoudéens a achevé le temple et a consacré le téménos, sous Lucius Claudius Modestus, légat des Augustes propréteur.

D. Ceci est le sanctuaire qu'a bâti Ša<sup>c</sup>dat, le prêtre de ʔlāhā, fils de Mugidū, qui est de (la tribu) Rubatū à ʔlāhā, le dieu de . . ., grâce au zèle de notre seigneur [. . .], le gouverneur.—[A gravé . . . fils] de ʔAmirū.

This text informs us that the *antistrategos*, the Roman governor Antistius Adventus along with his successor as governor of the Province of Arabia and future consul *suffectus* Claudius Modestus<sup>16</sup> inspired the construction of a temple upon the confederation of *Thamoudenoi* – the *Tamūd* from the Arab tradition<sup>17</sup>–, and they called off the disputes (in Aramaic *ramats* according to Milik’s reconstruction, based of a root attested in Classical Arabic too) within the same confederation *ἔθνος*. The inscription is dated to the period between 166 and 169, i.e., between the victory over the Parthians by Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus’ death, which occurred in 169. The temple’s external aspect, which must have looked Nabataean, is very striking since we know that it was built more than half a century after the year 106. But also in the linguistic field the traditionalism of the Roman allies is evident: they still use Nabataean, an Aramaic dialect from an already disappeared kingdom, while they spoke an Arabic language not too distant from the language of the future masters of the Middle East<sup>18</sup>. Let us note that the writing of Qur’anic Arabic comes from that earlier alphabet, whose features it still retains until today.<sup>19</sup>

As it is well-known *Ḥegrā*, was the capital of the Nabataeans, located in the northwest of Saudi Arabia, is called today *Madā’in Šāleḥ*. Its old name has fallen into disuse but it is preserved in the name of the archaeological site of the - *Ḥiḡr*<sup>20</sup>. Strabo mentions it in the context of the expedition of Aelius Gallus as “*κώμη Ἐγγά*” (vol. IV, 398, 16 Radt) and points out that it belonged to the Nabatean king *Oboda* (v. *infr.*).

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<sup>16</sup> On these figures and the implications of the inscription for the consular *fasti* see Bowersock 1975, 516ff. and notes 2, 3 and 1.

<sup>17</sup> See the article in the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (Bearman et alii 1960-2005), s.v. *Thamūd* by Irfan Shahîd.

<sup>18</sup> It is clearly difficult to classify the remains of the dialects related to posterior classical Arabic, given their exclusively epigraphic conservation. Today it seems that the language of the *Tamūd* (“*Tamūdic*”) should be classified among the “Ancient North Arabian (ANA)” dialects. An identification between epigraphic situation and the name of tribal group is denied by Macdonald 2000. As regards the old division according to Winnett (who classified this region as the birthplace of subdialect “E” *Tamudenic*), the work of G. King results in a “*Hismaic*” group corresponding to the above mentioned scenario, see Macdonald 2000, 29, 33ff. (denial of any connection with the tribe), 43ff. (classification as “*Hismaic*”).

<sup>19</sup> For the precise development see Gruendler 1993.

<sup>20</sup> A brief account of the presence of *Legio III Cyrenaica* and *ala Gaetulorum* (i. e. of Berbers) in and near the fortress and the *graffiti* and an inscription in Kennedy/Riley 1990, 37, more details in Graf 2007, index s.v. *Madā’in Šāleḥ*.

The name is derived from an Arabic prophet, Šāleḥ, who is mentioned in the Qur'an. According to suras 7, 73ff. and 11, 60ff. from the Muslims holy book, this Hanūfa (a monotheist previous to the Islam, a designation probably of Syriac origin) was sent by God to the Ṭamūd people (mentioned 21 times in the Qur'an)<sup>21</sup>, who reacted badly, cutting the tendons of the camel of the envoy. The Lord then annihilated them. This is clearly an explanatory story of Herodotean style in order to account for the reasons behind the disappearance of this pre-Islamic confederation. For the Qur'an, this tribe is a kind of primordial people. But thanks to the inscription mentioned, we can watch this people in *statu nascendi* under Roman rule. Equally important is the correspondence between the Greek concept of ἔθνος and the Arabic word *širka*, which is probably the result of the designation of this people as Sarakenoi by the Greeks since Pliny (NH VI, 32/157) and Ptolemy (VI, 7, 21 Nobbe; Millar 2003, 140, 388 and 484ff.)<sup>22</sup>. It should be underlined that the Alexandrian scholar mentions the Saracens immediately before the Ṭamūd. No wonder then that the Ṭamūd appear as *equites Saraceni Thamūdeni* in the *Notitia Dignitatum Orientis* (28.17 Neira Faleiro 2005)<sup>23</sup>. Similarly to Germanic peoples, these Arabs became *foederati* of the Romans and it should be no wonder that the neighbouring Empire decisively influenced the structure of Bedouin society, comparable to the one exerted over the people in the northern *limes*.

Likewise, in terms of religion the “barbarians” became adapted to the dominant culture of their time, already in pagan times. Let us observe for example the double designation of the games in commemoration of the victory of Actium in Bosra, the residence of the last Nabatean king, Rabbēl II, and capital of the province of Arabia since its foundation in 106. The *Actia* in that place were called *Actia Dusaria*, honouring Dusares, the most important Nabataean god. The interaction with the Roman (Roman-Hellenistic) component is remarkably shown in the bilingual inscription of Si ‘a near Kanatha in the Ḥaurān, where the name of a tribe, the ‘Ubayšat, appears always in Aramaic and Greek, under its Arabic designation (‘L "tribe", a word attested in the Qur'an also in Sura

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<sup>21</sup> According to Shahīd in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Bearman et alii 1960-2005, s.v. Thamūd.

<sup>22</sup> He discusses the importance of this inscription for the subsequent Christian designation of the Arabs.

<sup>23</sup> Behind the word *Scenas* there is probably another denomination of the desert tribes, σκηνίτας.



III) and the Greek form (*κοινόν*) (Millar 1993, 394d)<sup>24</sup>; probably dating from the time of Augustus. And already Herodotos and Julius Cesar had identified the Egyptian and German gods with those Greek and Roman... (Millar 1993, 399ff. and 424ff.<sup>25</sup>).

The thesis stating that the genesis of the Germanic tribes should not be situated in ancient times, but is rather the result of an interaction between these peoples and the Romans, which affected both groups, was defended by Reinhard Wenskus in his famous book, published in 1961, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*. This publication was crucial to overcome the idea that Germanic peoples, traditionally presented as precursors and ancestors of the Germans, would have been organised in tribes whose ancestral origin was sought in the Bronze Age. The results of research on the other *limes*, the Eastern one, on which we have some excellent books (as Kennedy/Riley 1990, Millar 1993, or Graf 1997) have sufficiently demonstrated that the Arabs were not barbarians who stormed as foreigners in the Roman world of Late Antiquity, but rather that they were well integrated into the Roman defence system of the *limes Arabicus*.

It is clear that the Romans used the new religion, Christianity, as a means of strengthening the loyalty of the tribes to the Empire. Cities built or enlarged by the Byzantines in the Negev, such as ‘Oboda/ ‘Avdat or Sobata/Shivṭa demonstrate this convincingly. ‘Avdat takes its name from a Nabataean king (Obodas II) and Nessana/Nizzana is one of the best examples to illustrate the continuity between the Ancient World and the New Muslim Order<sup>26</sup>.

The information about the Qurayš traded up to Adhriāt/Derā (about a hundred kilometers southwest of Damascus), or the very Damascus, indicates that they were following the *via nova Trajani*.<sup>27</sup> So it does not

<sup>24</sup> On this tribe there are numerous inscriptions in “Ancient Nord Arabian”, this time in “Safaitic”, see MacDonald 2000, 29.

<sup>25</sup> With more examples of Roman-Semitic syncretism in the field of religion.

<sup>26</sup> The authority in the field of the cities from Negev is clearly A. Negev; see Negev 1982, and on ‘Avdat Negev 1997. For Shivṭa see Segal 1983. See also Graf 1997, IX, 6ff., X, 345, 394. A rich archive of papyri from the Umayyad period, with Arab-Greek bilingual documents – whose Greek cursive writing is difficult to decipher – was found in the site of Nezzana, see Colt 1962 and the third volume of Kramer 1958.

<sup>27</sup> On the biblical city of Der ‘a in the north of the Decapolis (but included in it) see Millar 1993, 391 and 409. On the *nova via Trajani* cf. Graf 1997, nr. VI (“The Via nova Trajani in Arabia Petraea”). On the possible route of the Qurayš see Crone 2007, 77ff. (with a map of the via on p. 79). According to the Islamic tradition –

seem completely fictional to me that the young Prophet met a heretical monk in the metropolis of the Provincia Arabica Bosra... (Crone 2007, 80)<sup>28</sup>.

We cannot ascertain the theory cautiously formulated by P. Crone on the role of Qurayš during the last Byzantine-Persian war. According to our Danish colleague, they provided the Roman army with leather, an essential equipment, for example, for the tents used during Herakleios' military campaigns. A Roman legion consumed the skin of over sixty-five thousand goats, excluding *limitanei* troops (Crone 2007, 68)<sup>29</sup>. It seems likely that the relatives of Muhammad were a kind of allied population of the Romans, a *civitas foederata*.

It seems possible, therefore, that the Islamic conquests were to some extent a continuation of the attempts of Rome's pagan disciples, similar to those in the times of Queen Zenobia, but in a different context, that is to say, after the scenario of total war outlined before: the last war of Antiquity. To understand the transition between Antiquity and the Middle Ages we should include the conquests of the Caliphate army in the scheme of the regrouping of Empires in the Mediterranean world, which also included the post-Roman kingdoms of Gaul, Lombard Italy and of the Iberian Peninsula.

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not homogeneous, of course – Walīd ibn al-Muġīra, the father of Ḥālīd ibn al-Walīd (companion of the Prophet and then conqueror of Syria) owed an amount of money to the bishop of Damascus. He was very rich and contributed to rebuild the Ka'aba; Crone 2007, 77.

<sup>28</sup> See also the recent and thoroughgoing book by Roggema 2009.

<sup>29</sup> The erudite colleague has counted ten thousand of them.

NEW ALPHABETS  
FOR THE CHRISTIAN NATIONS:  
FRONTIER STRATEGIES IN THE BYZANTINE  
COMMONWEALTH BETWEEN THE 4<sup>TH</sup>  
AND 10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Preliminary remarks

The term ‘commonwealth’ has been only tangentially applied to the Byzantine Empire, first by Dimitri Obolensky (1971) with reference to the Slavic world of the Eastern Empire and then, more ambitiously, by Garth Fowden (1993), who adopted it as a convenient term to describe the new political framework created by Constantine I’s adoption of Christian Monotheism. According to Fowden, Constantine Rome became “an aspiring politico-cultural world *Empire*”, but aspirations could not be turned into reality, so the Christian Empire gradually evolved into a “much looser, more pluralistic type of structure we call *commonwealth*”. In using this term, he intends to denote “a group of politically discrete but related polities collectively distinguishable from other polities or commonwealths by a shared culture and history” (Fowden, 1993, 6). Cultural (mostly religious in his interpretation) and political universalisms thus become the tools by which he is able to identify late antiquity ‘commonwealths’ both in Byzantium and Islam. Thus, Fowden establishes a First Byzantine Commonwealth, developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. and defined by the Council of Chalcedon of 451, and ending with the Persian and Islamic campaigns of the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. He identifies a Second Byzantine Commonwealth

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<sup>1</sup> This study has been made possible by funding provided by the Spanish research project FFI2012-37908-C02-01.

with the Slavic world studied by Obolensky. Byzantium, as a political entity, obviously goes beyond these two markers, both chronologically and geographically.

My purpose in the present paper is much more limited, but not without problems, for I intend to reflect on one particular aspect of the missionary activity of the Byzantines from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> c.; the period during which Fowden's First Commonwealth lasted and the Second was established. Specifically, I mean to consider the role the appearance of new writing systems for the peripheral Christian nations played in the shaping of this 'imperial commonwealth'.

Obviously, the topic is very complex and worthy of a more detailed study by specialists in the different cultural and literary traditions that emerged at this time under the common umbrella of Christianity. However, as no single overview of the common patterns by which these alphabets were created has ever been written,<sup>2</sup> it may not be without interest to advance some short reflections on the matter that could provide stimulus for further research. Recent research has also made possible an approach that was perhaps unconceivable some years ago, not to speak at the time when Fowden's book was written. This may explain the fact that the emergence of new alphabets is almost completely neglected in Fowden's account of the relations of the Empire with the neighbouring nations in the fifth chapter of his book, and also makes such an approach even more necessary, for I am utterly convinced that this point represents the Gordian knot for understanding the process by which a new common identity, leading to the very concept of 'commonwealth of nations', was developed.

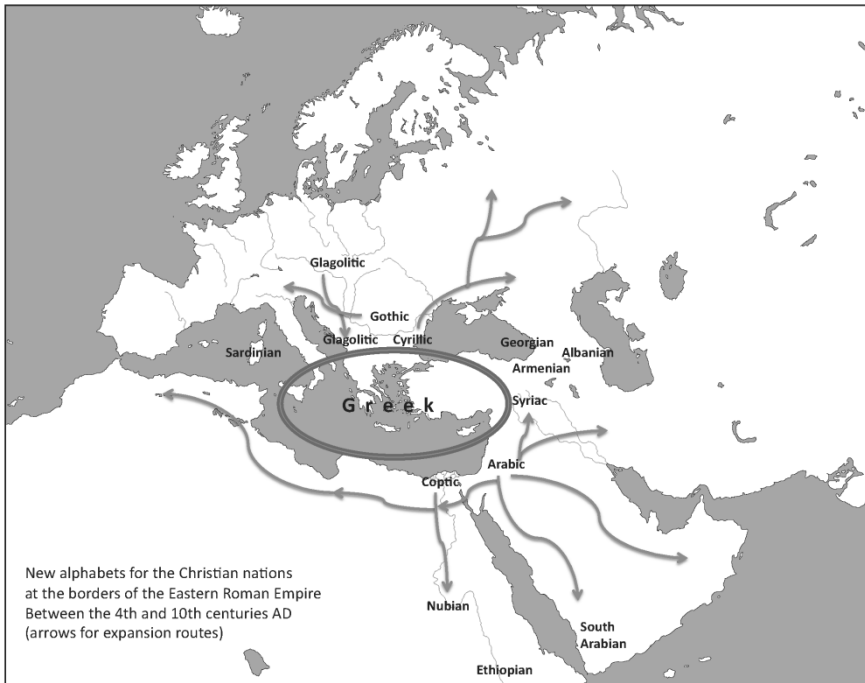
The main point in my discussion will be what we can perhaps label as a false dilemma, namely if the new alphabets developed by the peripheral Christian nations can be regarded as a piece of a deliberate project to establish a Byzantine Commonwealth, or instead as a consequence of the inability of the Empire to control the periphery. To answer this question, it must be stressed above all that the emergence of new Christian nations, that is, states that were politically autonomous of the Empire, was made possible not only by their adoption of the Christian faith, but precisely by developing their own national literatures expressed through new distinctive alphabets. The all-pervading visual force of a new alphabet to create a national consciousness was consequently and simultaneously

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, Brakke et al. 2012 does not contain any reflection on the problem of literary identities, although the topic of the book is *shifting frontiers*.

exploited at the time by such a disparate range of peoples in such geographically different scenarios all around the borders of the Empire that it can hardly be a coincidence. There are, in my opinion, two possibilities to explain this phenomenon, which are, to a great extent, complementary.

Figure 1. Map of alphabets



First, although Christianity became the official religion of the Empire after Constantine I, this circumstance could not erase the previous history of the religion, which spanned the three long centuries during which the Christian credo was constituted through continuous polemics against paganism and, more importantly, in a fierce fight against the Roman Empire itself (considered apocalyptically as the last of the Empires before the second coming of the Messiah). Eusebius, the mastermind behind Constantine's political program, tried to redress this attitude by putting the Empire in the middle of God's plans and making of it what Fowden

labelled “an aspiring politico-cultural world Empire” in which the Christian religion remained the main ‘cultural’ (or ideological) force. The *Church History* of Eusebius was the main work of this program, for it established the isochrony of Augustus and Christ, respectively the founders of the Empire and Christendom and made the progress of Christianity inside the Empire as the result of God’s foreseeing. However, Christianity did not immediately lose its potential as a liberating force for the nations and it could in fact be used by the periphery to attack the centre, be it Rome or Constantinople. Some Christian missions since Constantine’s conversion, as we shall see, were partly conceived and directed from the periphery and against the immediate interests of the Empire.

We cannot, however, exclude – and this is the second possibility I want to address here – that the Empire could have deliberately adopted a different policy towards the periphery after the devastating effects of the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. Although Diocletian created a new model of a centralised Empire destined to live for a thousand years, this did not lead to a new expansionist policy such as the one adopted, perhaps for the last time, by Emperor Trajan. In fact, since Constantine, Julian was the only emperor who tried to expand the Empire beyond its established borders in an ill-fated campaign against Persia that served as a warning against similar enterprises in the future. Slowly, a more suitable policy was adopted by emperors towards the defence of the *limes*; a policy that spared human and material resources and took advantage of the potentiality of the new religion.<sup>3</sup> The creation of Christian buffer states all around the frontier of the Empire was now considered to be more effective for defending the Empire than never-ending campaigns against fierce nations outside the *limes*. However, these buffer states could not be rewarded for their fidelity to the Empire with just the feeling of belonging to a politically or culturally superior entity. Recognition of their own identity was perhaps needed in order to make the new nations feel comfortable in their role of guardians of the borders of the Roman Empire.

The building of this sense of ‘commonwealth’, which forcibly included the acknowledgment of the national differences, was not easy to acquire, especially for Roman emperors who were used to imposing uniformity upon their subjects following the Diocletian model. See, for example, from

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<sup>3</sup> For a reevaluation of late antique and medieval frontiers in relation not only to fortifications but also to ethnicity see now the case studies collected in the book of Curta 2006.

the very beginning of the period considered here, the letter addressed by Emperor Constantius II to the Ethiopians concerning Frumentius, who had been consecrated by Athanasios of Alexandria as their bishop. This consecration infuriated the emperor, for Athanasios was the main adversary of his Arian faith. In the beginning of the letter, the emperor makes a clear-cut statement on the absolute uniformity that must prevail in the faith even between the far distant Ethiopians and the Romans (emphasis mine):

“It is altogether a matter of the greatest care and concern to us to extend the knowledge of the supreme God; and I think that the **whole** race of mankind (**τὸ κοινὸν** τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος) claims from us **equal** regard in this respect (τῆς ἴσης ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις... κηδεμονίας) in order that they may pass their lives in hope, being brought to a proper knowledge of God, and having **no differences** (**μηδὲν διαφωνοῦντες**) with each other in their enquiries concerning justice and truth. Wherefore considering that you are deserving of the **same** provident care (τῆς αὐτῆς τοίνυν προνοίας) as the Romans, and desiring to shew **equal** regard (**τῶν ἴσων**) for your welfare, we command that the **same** doctrine be professed (**ἐν τι μετ’ αὐτῶν κρατεῖν δόγμα**) in your Churches as in theirs.” (*Apologia* ch. 31, §2-3, ed. Brennecke et al., 2006; trans. Robertson 1891, 251)

Six centuries later, at the end of the period considered here, the Emperor Constantine VII addressed to his son and future Emperor Romanos II a treatise about the relations of the Empire with the foreign nations, conventionally called by their modern editors *De administrando imperio* (in fact not without some basis, for the administration of the Empire was highly dependant on the periphery in the line of our argumentation here). In a separate chapter, Constantine warns his son not to comply always with the demands of nations allied to the Empire, for even if they remain Christian, they preserve their own laws and traditions. Marriages between members of the imperial family and alien rulers must be thus avoided (again, my emphasis):

“For each nation has **different** customs and **divergent** laws and institutions (ἐκαστον γὰρ ἔθνος **διάφορα** ἔχον ἔθη καὶ **διαλλάττοντας** νόμους τε καὶ θεσμοὺς) and should consolidate those things that are **proper** to it (ὀφείλει τὰ **οἰκεῖα** κρατύνειν), and should form and develop out of the same nation the associations for the fusion of its life. For just as each animal mates with its own tribe, so it is right that each nation also should marry and cohabit not with those of other race and tongue but of the **same** tribe and speech (ἐκ τῶν **ὁμογενῶν** τε καὶ **ὁμοφώνων**). For hence arise naturally harmony of thought and intercourse among one another and friendly converse and living together (ἢ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ συνομιλία καὶ

προσφιλης συνδιατριβη και συμβιωσις); but **alien** customs and **divergent** laws (τὰ δὲ **ἀλλότρια** ἔθη καὶ **διαλλάττοντα** νόμματα) are likely on the contrary to engender enmities and quarrels and hatreds and boils, with tend to beget not friendship and association, but spite and division”. (Moravcsik and Jenkins, 1967, chapter 13, 74-75)

The emperor had already renounced imposing Roman uniformity on the allies with the argument that this would be the cause of more troubles. Instead of insisting on the uniformity of the faith (or even justice and truth as in Constantius’s letter), the stress was now on keeping distance and preserving identities, laws and institutions. The contrast with Constantius cannot be more acute and is indicative of the change of mentality towards the periphery: from the Empire to the Commonwealth.

My purpose now is to make a rapid overview of the profile of some missionaries or churchmen who brought new alphabets and therefore a new literary culture to the peripheral nations of the Empire since Constantius II until Constantine VII. I will do this in order to detect, following the scarce sources at our disposal, if their endeavour was, if not sponsored, at least supervised by the imperial authorities. Two periods are involved: a first one covering the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was the major era of the Christian missions, and a second one centred mainly in the 9<sup>th</sup> c. I will focus not only on the Asian and African borders to which Fowden directed his sole attention, but also on the European peripheral territories linked to the Eastern Empire.

The Roman Empire, as many other Empires of Antiquity, was not only multilingual, but also admitted more than one official language. In this case this happened only in the eastern part of the Empire, where Latin and Greek coexisted with an official status from the very beginning of Roman rule (the *res gestae divi Augusti* were inscribed in Greek in the East) to the reign of Justinian, when the *praefectus praetorius* John the Cappadocian ordered the exclusive use of Greek for administrative use in the empire, thus putting an end to the presence of Latin as a normative language in the East. Moreover, whereas no literary tradition ever challenged the absolute rule of Latin in the West (thus paving the way to what we could label ‘Latin imperialism’, which was dominant for centuries in western Europe until deep into modern times), the Greek not just concurred with Latin in the eastern half of the Empire, but had to share its status with other languages with a millenary history, first and foremost, Aramaic and Coptic. Accordingly, in the era of the missions that started immediately after the conversion of Constantine, the coexistence of languages with a similar ‘pedigree’ was anything but unusual in the eastern half of the Empire. However, Greek enjoyed an incomparably higher status than the



other languages after the Roman conquest had imposed it as the official *koine* in the East. Accordingly, Greek language and literature and even the Greek alphabet, while not providing the model, at least constituted the reference for any new single language intending to be admitted in the 'literary commonwealth' of the East.

The appearance of new national literatures in the Christian nations surrounding the Empire went through successive stages. A particular case is represented by SYRIAC (§2), which was standardised in Edessa already at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries before the Christianisation of the territory. However, it was during the first wave of the missions, in the 4<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, when many new national literatures emerged, which in many cases were accompanied by the invention of new alphabets. We dispose of some evidence for GOTHIC (§3), ETHIOPIAN (GE'EZ) (§4), ARMENIAN, IBERIAN, ALBANIAN (§5) and COPTIC (§6). To this group, in a second wave of missions, came NUBIAN (§7), ARABIC (§8) and SOUTH ARABIAN (§9) in the 6<sup>th</sup> c., in the era of territorial expansion fostered by Justinian. Then, after an unavoidable pause caused by the crisis of the "dark centuries" in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, came the alphabets of the Slavs, namely GLAGOLITIC and CYRILLIC (§10), to which the particular case of SARDINIAN (§11) as an epigone can be added. Let us now briefly review this evidence and consider, when possible, both the motivations behind the missionaries or churchmen who created or standardised these alphabets, and the typological dependence of their letters on the Greek model. Needless to say, we will limit ourselves to highlighting the main arguments pertinent for our purpose here, for there is obviously no place in the present paper to consider all the problems with the required depth.

## 2. Syriac

The Syriac alphabet, one of the numerous descendants of the Aramaic script, was constituted as a homogeneous writing in Edessa at a date that is subject to discussion. Although there are inscriptions of Old Syriac from the beginning of our era (Drijvers and Healey, 1999), it appears that the constitution of Syriac as a literary language only developed at the time of Bardaisan (154-222 AD), an Edessan polytymath who was contemporary of King Abgar VIII (177-212 AD) and to whom a good number of prose and

verse compositions are attributed, most of which have been lost.<sup>4</sup> Bardaisan, who was educated in Greek but only wrote in Syriac,<sup>5</sup> is usually known as “the Aramean philosopher” and credited as the founder of a school. Although his links to Christianity are dubious (he was probably a sort of syncretic gnostic) and later Syriac writers label him as heretic, his role as founder of national Syriac literature cannot be paralleled by any other figure of the time,<sup>6</sup> and it is only rivalled by the early Syriac versions of the Old Testament, whose dating and even authorship (Jews or Christians?) is much debated.

In any case, the constitution of Syriac as a national language precedes the Christianisation of the land, which took place during the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. and especially in the 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>7</sup> The case of Syriac is also different from the emergence of other Christian literary traditions (such as the ones we will consider below) because Aramaic, from which Syriac derived, already enjoyed enormous prestige both as a language and a writing system. Indeed, it was the *koiné* of the East before Greek, and also closely related to Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Syriac did not need to struggle for recognition against Greek, as both languages were considered the “expression and vehicle of the same Hellenic civilisation”.<sup>9</sup>

The reason for referring here, however cursorily, to Syriac (aside from the impact it could have had as a model for the emergence of later national literatures) is the fact that Syriac alphabet and literature arose in a peripheral land, the kingdom of Edessa, which served as a buffer state between the Roman and Persian Empires. To put it another way, it was not the bilingual Antioch, but the most peripheral Edessa, the place where Syriac was codified to serve as the vehicle of literary expression and this, most probably, under the impulse of a king, Abgar VIII, who managed to survive and retain a degree of independence between the two superpowers surrounding his little realm. The Hellenised and later, after Trajan’s

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to the controversial monographs of Drijvers 1966 and Teixidor 1992, see short references to Bardaisan in McCullough 1982, 28-32; Brock 1997, 15; Bettiolo 2006, 429-431 (with bibliography).

<sup>5</sup> For the coexistence of both languages in Syria see Brock 1982 and 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Significantly, the tribute to Prof. Drijvers receives the title “after Bardaisan” (Reinink and Klugkist 1999).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Ross 2001, 117-138.

<sup>8</sup> Saint Basil in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. already gave importance to the Syriac version of the Bible. See his Homily II §6 in Giet 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Quotation from Drijvers 1992, 126.

conquest, Romanised kingdom in the Osroene saw during its last phase of independence – and before its final annexation to Rome in 242 AD – how its elites developed their own literary tradition besides Greek and the Persian identities.<sup>10</sup> Despite the annexation, however, the project did not stop and continued to develop during the 4<sup>th</sup> c. into a vast corpus of works. The extension of the model and definitive consecration of Syriac literature came finally in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. with Jacob Baradaeus († 578), who created the national Church of Syria with its own patriarch in Antioch. Direct sources about how the Syriac alphabet and literature consolidated during this long period are not available, but it may perhaps be surmised that Rome did nothing to prevent the expansion, for it undoubtedly favoured the cause of the Empire among the Syrian subjects of the borderline, especially when the new Sassanid dynasty in Iran began to fiercely persecute Christians in their realm. The lesson to be learned was that fostering national identities could not ultimately be disadvantageous for the Empire, but rather the opposite.

### 3. Gothic

In the case of the invention of the Gothic alphabet, there can be no doubt as to either the imperial sponsorship for the new writing system or its graphic dependence on the Greek model.

To begin with the first point, the Arian court of Emperor Constantius II appears to have taken the opportunity to convert the Goths who had settled beyond the Danube frontier by appointing as their bishop a Greek (Cappadocian) who had been taken prisoner by the Goths and later sent by them to Constantinople as their ambassador. Because this Ulfilas, for this was his name, had been raised with his family among the Goths and learnt their language and customs, he was able to develop a writing system for the Gothic language that was used to translate the Bible. The *Church History* of the Arian Philostorgios (368–ca. 439) in the summary made by Photios perfectly outlines the process:

“While Valerian [253-260] and Gallienus [253-268] were administering the empire, a large multitude of Scythians, who lived north of the Ister, made an incursion into the Roman territory, and laid waste a great part of Europe by their predatory excursions and afterwards having crossed over

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<sup>10</sup> For the ‘Golden Age’ of Edessan culture during the reign of Abgar VIII, see Ross 2001, 83-116. For classical studies on the history of Edessa until the definitive capture of the city by the Arabs, see Duval 1892 and Segal 1970.

into Asia, invaded Cappadocia and Galatia (267?). Here they took a large quantity of prisoners, among whom were not a few ecclesiastics; and they returned to their own country laden with spoils and booty.

These pious captives, by their intercourse with the barbarians, brought over a great number of the latter to the true faith, and persuaded them to embrace the Christian religion in the place of heathen superstitions. Of the number of these captives were the ancestors of Urphilas [Οὐρφίλα] himself, who were of Cappadocian descent, deriving their origin from a village called Sadagolthina, near time city of Parnassus.

This Urphilas, then, was the header of this pious band which came out from among the Goths, and became eventually their first bishop. The following was the method of his appointment. Being sent by the then king of the Goths on an embassy to the court of the emperor Constantine (for the barbarous tribes in those parts were subject to the emperor), he was ordained bishop of the Christians among time Goths, by Eusebius [of Nicomedia] and the other prelates that were with him.

Accordingly he took the greatest care of them in many ways, and amongst others, he reduced their language to a written form (γραμματῶν αὐτοῖς οικείων εὐρετῆς καταστάς), and translated into their vulgar tongue all the books of holy Scripture (μετέφρασεν εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν φωνὴν τὰς γραφὰς ἀπάσας), with the exception of the Books of Kings, which he omitted, because they are a mere narrative of military exploits, and the Gothic tribes were especially fond of war, and were in more need of restraints to check their military passions than of spurs to urge them on to deeds of war. [...]

This multitude of converts were located by the emperor in the different parts of Moesia, as he thought best, and he held Urphilas himself in such high honour, that he would often speak of him in conversation as the Moses of his day. Philostorgius is loud in his praises of this Urphilas; and asserts that both he and the Goths who were under his spiritual rule, were followers of his own heretical opinions. (Winkelman, 1981, chapter 5; trans. Walford, 1896)<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, Constantius did not just try to convert the Goths outside the Empire, but even favoured the settlement of some converted groups in the imperial province of Moesia to the south of the Danube. Whatever the final purpose was – either to secure the Empire's borders or set the basis for a future re-occupation of Dacia – in the middle term the project was considered a failure on account of the heavy defeat of the imperial troops in Adrianople in 376, which opened the Balkans to a massive *Landnahme* by the Goths. However, the fact remains that the Goths preserved their

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<sup>11</sup> On Ulfilas see also Sokrates, Sozomenos and Theodoret.

Christian Arian faith for centuries and, in the long term, they could be used as allies against more fierce Barbarians entering the Empire from the Rhine frontier: this is the case of the Visigoths acting as *foederati* in Hispania or of the Ostrogoths freeing Italy from the ‘tyrannical’ rule of Odoacer. Moreover, as it is well known, the Visigoth and Ostrogoth kingdoms preserved the Classical legacy in the West much better than other German nations, like the Franks, who had not been converted before entering the Empire. Certainly, the Visigoth Alaric tried to capture Constantinople by siege in 395 and was responsible for the sack of Rome in 410. However, what really matters are not the struggles between Goths and Romans, but the fact that both Visigoths with Alaric in 401 and then Ostrogoths with Theodoric in 488 were successively expelled from the Balkans by the authorities of Constantinople, who wanted to get rid of their presence in a territory so close to the real capital of the Empire and conceived for them distant tasks in the West. The plan was actually a success, for inside an Empire that was breaking asunder, the eastern Greek half preserved its frontiers for centuries by creating culturally dependant kingdoms in the West.<sup>12</sup> Even Arianism ceased to represent a major divide between Christians in Visigoth Hispania or Ostrogoth Italy over time.

It is against this model that the graphic dependence of the Gothic script on the Greek model is to be understood. In fact, from a typological point of view, Gothic was not a new alphabet inspired in the Greek, but an uncial form of the Greek alphabet adapted for writing Goth and accordingly expanded with a few complementary letters (some of Runic origin) to account for the proper Gothic phonemes. So evident was the influence of the Greek letters that there have been authors who denied that the Runes used by the Goths before Ulfila’s alphabet could have served as a source for his model or were even known to him.<sup>13</sup> This approach, however, has been refuted by recent research that has convincingly argued that the Gothic letters took into account the form and the phonetic value of some Runes although adapted them to the Greek patterns and adopted the Greek alphabetic order.<sup>14</sup> This is important, for it means that Ulfila knew the Runes, but preferred instead to use the Greek alphabet as a basis for the creation of the Gothic script. He decided to do so not just because “the runes would seem quite unsuitable for a translation of the Bible into Visigothic” (Mees, 2002-2003, 76), for the Runic script could be improved

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<sup>12</sup> An overview can be found in Burns 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Mainly Ebbinghaus 1979 and 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Cercignani 1988 and Mees 2002-2003, 63-68.

without recourse to other writing systems, but most probably because he “needed a Gothic alphabet that would be appropriate to the scribal tradition of his time and of the geographical area in which he lived” (Cercignani, 1988, p.171). Moreover, it is not only the “restricted epigraphic habit” of the Runic<sup>15</sup> against the “long scribal tradition” of the Greek the factor that definitely inclined the balance towards Greek. Most probably, “the visual link” of the Gothic-Greek letters with Byzantium was decisive in Ulfila’s choice, for it served to create a sense of continuity between the two cultures. If we follow the letter of his stepson Auxentios, Ulfilas “preached in the Greek, Latin, and Gothic tongues without ceasing in the one and only Church of Christ” (“grecam et latinam et goticam linguam sine intermissione in una et sola ecclesia Christi predicavit”)<sup>16</sup>, that is, he did not try to create a national Gothic identity at the expense of the Roman one (how could he, being a Roman bishop?), but rather to reinforce the solidarity among Goths and Romans by putting the Gothic language side by side with Latin and Greek. In fact, Gothic literature never came to assume a central role for the Goths, for this would have supposed a break with the cultural tradition of the Empire.

Theodoric, the ruler of Italy (493-526), was probably perfectly aware of this when he commissioned a luxury copy of the Gothic translation of the Gospels written in gold and silver ink on a thin, purple-coloured vellum of very high quality; the so-called Silver Bible or *Codex argenteus*, which is preserved today in Uppsala.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this was an act of symbolic reaffirmation of the own identity, but without consequences for the absolute hegemony of Latin in Theodoric’s realm. Certainly, things could have gone differently if Theodoric had remained in the East, at least if we compare this situation with what happened later to the Balkan Slavs in the 9<sup>th</sup> c., as we will see in §10. Nevertheless, this comparison is perhaps not wholly advisable, as circumstances were different in the two periods. In fact, when the Gothic author Jordanes took the pen during Justinian’s reign to write the *Getica* ca. 550 (the first national history ever written for a German people), he still used Latin in order to address both Roman and Gothic audiences. In any case, the existence of a Gothic literary tradition modelled on Roman patterns, however subsidiary, was very important to foster the integration of the Goths into the Empire (one of the main issues

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<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Williams 2004, 262-273.

<sup>16</sup> Translation by Jim Marchand in <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/texts/auxentius.html>.

<sup>17</sup> See Munkhammar 2011. An online digital publication of the codex is to be found in the web page of the Uppsala University Library.

on the agenda of Roman diplomacy!), for it acknowledged in a certain sense their distinctive identity among the commonwealth of the nations of the Empire. The move to provide them with their own literary tradition may appear disruptive in the eyes of modern Nation-States, but was at the time a wise move by Constantius as he secured the fidelity of the Goths to the very idea of the Empire: he rightly felt proud about it calling Ulfilas a second Moses. The influence of this missionary model for later missions among Barbaric nations cannot be underestimated.

#### 4. Ethiopian

The case of the missions among the Ethiopians, which were also sponsored by Constantius II, is also of interest for our concern here, for it presents both striking similarities and notable differences with the case of the Goths. To begin with the differences, the most relevant one was that the Ethiopians had a very old literary tradition before the arrival of the missionaries as they used a consonantal alphabet for writing their language known as Ge'ez. However, there was a change precisely at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. when the Ge'ez script was transformed into an *abugida*: a system where vowels are written as diacritics that modify the consonant letters. This writing is different from syllabaries, where letters with shared consonants or vowels show no particular resemblance to each another. However, it is beyond our scope to consider whence the model came that transformed the Ge'ez script into an *abugida*, for Aksum lay at a crossroads of trade routes that connected the land both with the Mediterranean world of Rome and India. Indeed, some scholars have suggested as probable the influence of Indian scripts.<sup>18</sup> But the main point for us here is that the new writing system was developed during the reign of King Ezana of Aksum (ca. 320s - ca. 360), the ruler who converted the land to Christianity. Whether or not with precedents, it is clear that Ge'ez was transformed and standardised to cope with a new, higher function as the official language of the new Christian state. Significantly, Greek, used before the reform, continued to coexist with Ge'ez for quite a long time. As Munro-Hay puts it:

“Preceding the common use of Ge'ez, Greek was the chosen official language of the inscriptions and coins. This was evidently largely orientated towards foreign residents and visitors, and can hardly have been

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<sup>18</sup> For an overview of Ge'ez script and literacy, see Munro-Hay 1991, 205-210.

understood by more than the smallest section of the ruling class and merchant community. There must also have been a body of more or less learned men who acted as scribes in preparing the drafts of the inscriptions, perhaps priests or a special corps of clerks. Greek remained the language of the coins, particularly the gold, until the end of the coinage, but its quality degenerated quickly. Coins datable to the fourth and fifth centuries already show errors in their Greek legends”.<sup>19</sup>

As in the case of the Gothic, we lack sources informing us about the circumstances and purposes that lead to the transformation of the consonantal alphabet into an *abugida*. However, we can surmise, considering the parallelism, that the integration of Ethiopia in the commonwealth of Christian nations was again the aim. The continuous use of Greek for representative matters in inscriptions and coins is therefore very significant, for it means that the establishment of links prevailed over ruptures.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Frumentius, the Christian missionary of the Ethiopians, entered the court of Ezama as a Roman prisoner, and being a cultivated man, gained access to the young king, who, according to the *Church History* of Rufinus, “entrusted his accounts and correspondence”, surely in Greek, to him.<sup>21</sup>

That the Greek alphabet was not imposed, contrary to the case of Gothic, was unavoidable, considering the old literary tradition of the Ge’ez script and the peripheral situation of the land. Again, the main point is – and here we come to the closest parallel to the Gothic case – that the moves of King Ezama towards Christianity were directly overseen by Constantius II, who could not allow that the missionary bishop Frumentius, chosen by King Ezama to guide the steps of the land toward Christianisation, be consecrated by the Nicene bishop Athanasios, as we mentioned in §1. Accordingly, in the letter mentioned above, Constantius ordered that Frumentius’ fidelity to the Arian credo be checked. He wrote:

Now if Frumentius shall readily obey our commands, and shall submit to an enquiry into all the circumstances of his appointment, he will show plainly to all men, that he is in no respect opposed to the laws of the Church and the established faith. And being brought to trial, when he shall have given proof of his general good conduct, and submitted an account of his life to those who are to judge of these things, he shall receive his

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<sup>19</sup> Munro-Hay 1991, 207

<sup>20</sup> Not to mention the fact that the Greek alphabet was employed to express numbers in numeral form. See, for instance, Lambdin 1978, 7 and 9.

<sup>21</sup> Rufinus X.9, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1999.



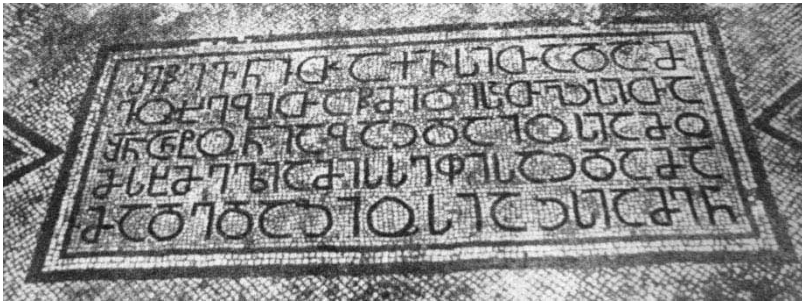
appointment from them, if it shall indeed appear that he has any right to be a Bishop. But if he shall delay and avoid the trial, it will surely be very evident that he has been induced by the persuasions of the wicked Athanasius, thus to indulge impiety against God, choosing to follow the course of him whose wickedness has been made manifest. And our fear is lest he should pass over into Auxumis and corrupt your people, by setting before them accursed and impious statements, and not only unsettle and disturb the Churches, and blaspheme the supreme God, but also thereby cause utter overthrow and destruction to the several nations whom he visits. But I am sure that Frumentius will return home, perfectly acquainted with all matters that concern the Church, having derived much instruction, which will be of great and general utility, from the conversation of the most venerable George, and such other of the Bishops, as are excellently qualified to communicate such knowledge. (*Apologia* ch. 31, §4-5, ed. Brennecke et al., 2006; trans. Robertson, 1891, 251-252)

Obviously, the emperor could not substitute another missionary for Frumentius, who had gained access to the king in exceptional circumstances. But he could not miss the opportunity to take advantage of Frumentius' work either. Given that the aim was to attract the Ethiopians to the commonwealth of the Christian nations presided by the emperor, the means used to achieve such a goal were of secondary relevance. Thus, the letter betrays the essential weakness of the emperor, who wanted to assure his authority over the Nicenes. However, as he could not afford to send someone other than Frumentius, he implicitly paved the way for the recognition of the missionary. This is clear evidence of the importance of the issue and, of course, of the land, which played a strategic role not only for trade with India, but as a bulwark against the possible expansion of the Semitic peoples of South Arabia in the land of the Upper Nile.

Nevertheless, the Christianisation of Ethiopia could not be assured insofar as the land was surrounded by non-Christian nations both to the north (Nubia) and to the east (Yemen) of their territories. Later missions in Nubia in the 6<sup>th</sup> c., which we will focus on below in §7, succeeded in providing a safer land connection through the Nile, whereas the conquest of Yemen by Ethiopia in the same period, which we will shortly address in §9, guaranteed the control of the Aden Straits and trade through the Red Sea.

## 5. Armenian, Georgian and Albanian

Figure 2. Georgian mosaic inscription in *Asomtavruli* alphabet found in the Monastery of Bir el-Qutt near in Bethlehem and dated to the sixth century, from Tarchnisvili, M., “Il monasterio georgiano di S. Teodoro a Bir el-Qutt”, in Corbo, V.C. (1955), *Gli scavi di Khirbet Siyar El-Ghanam (Campo dei pastori) e i monasteri dei dintorni (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio Maior 11)*, 135-139 and esp. fot. 104.



We must wait for about fifty years for specific information about the circumstances leading to the creation of a new writing system for a Christian nation in the orbit of the Empire. Now, it is the Armenian alphabet invented ca. 405<sup>22</sup> by the famous Armenian monk Mesrop Mashtots or Maštoc‘ (361/362-440). Again, we will briefly consider here both the historical background and the typology of the alphabet in relation to the Greek. These two aspects will illuminate the case of the Georgian alphabet, and also of the much less known Albanian, whose invention is also attributed to Mesrop.

The best source for Mesrop’s biography is the *Life* supposedly written by his disciple Koryun in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Unfortunately, the text of the *Life* is anything but reliable, for there is one long and one short version of it and both have been interpolated and manipulated over the course of centuries.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, the data provided by the *Life of Mesrop* must be approached with utmost care and checked against other available evidence. However, as the *Life* provides a very detailed account about the process to create the alphabet, and is in fact the most accurate source available for all of the writing systems considered here, it is worth

<sup>22</sup> For the date, see Krikorian 2011.

<sup>23</sup> For details, see Mahé 1994-1995.

reproducing some of its passages. According to the *Life*:

“...from childhood he [Mesrop] had been tutored in Greek literature, and coming to the court of the Arsacid kings in Armenia Major, served in the royal secretariat, as an executor of the royal commands, during the service of one named Arvan as the *hazarapet* of the land of Armenia. He was well versed in secular laws, and was esteemed by his men for his mastery of the military art”. (trans. Norehad, 1964, §4)

Mesrop was also trained in Greek culture, particularly in literature, law and technical writings; a fact which probably favoured his promotion at the court. He received the obvious education for a noble living in a nation with a millenary relationship with the Greeks and converted to Christianity from the very beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. Nothing is said in the text about Mesrop’s knowledge of Persian or Aramean, the official languages of the Sassanid Empire, which threatened Armenia’s independence at the same time. However, when Mesrop, after being consecrated as monk, decides to give a new alphabet to his people with the assistance of the katholikos of the Church Sahak (Isaak) and King Vramshapuh, he looks first to the Semitic background of Syria. Thus, when the king heard of the plans of Mesrop and the katholikos “he told them of a man named Daniel, a Syrian bishop of noble lineage, who unexpectedly had come into the possession of letters of Armenian alphabet” (trans. Norehad, 1964, §6). An emissary was sent to the Syrian bishop and returned with the “letters”. The katholikos and Mesrop began to teach young students with this alphabet for two years, but then “they became aware of the fact that those letters were insufficient to form all the syllables of the Armenian language, especially since the letters essentially proved to have been buried and then resurrected from other languages” (*ibid.*). It is not clear how this indication is to be understood, but it is likely that they used a Semitic alphabet which was adapted to write Armenian, perhaps dating from an old time, if the indication is to be trusted. This first attempt ended in failure so that...

“...the blessed Mashtots took leave with a kiss of holiness, on the fifth year of King Vramshapuh’s reign, and came to the region of Aram, to two Assyrian cities, one of which was called Edessa, and the other, Amid. There he presented himself to two bishops, one of whom was called Babilas, and the other, Akakios. And they, clergy and nobles of the city, received the visitors with due honours and solicitude, in keeping with the custom of Christians. The dedicated teacher then divided his pupils into two groups, assigning one group to the Assyrian school in the city of Edessa, and the other to the Hellenic school in Samosata”. (trans. Norehad, 1964, §7)

The Hellenic Samosata and the Semitic Edessa (the cradle of Syriac!) seem now to compete for the honour of providing the basis for the new alphabet. Significantly, it was Samosata who finally won out, for there Mashtots found

“a Hellenic scribe, named Ropanos, by whose hands all the variations of the letters, thin and heavy strokes, long and short, the single letters as well as the diphthongs were devised, after which he proceeded with translations, with the help of two of his pupils, Hovhan, from the province of Ekeghiats, and Hovsep from the House of Baghan. And thus began the translation of the Bible, first, the Proverbs of Solomon...” (trans. Norehad, 1964, §8)

The passage is highly relevant, for as Cercignani supposed for the Gothic script, the “scribal tradition” appears to be determinant in the final shaping of the alphabet. Isolated letters without scribal training proved useless, for ductus was not easy to acquire. This circumstance apparently determined the final choice of the forms of the letters of the alphabet drawn by an experienced Greek scribe. Naturally, what followed was the implementation of the new writing system in Armenia with the invaluable support of the king.

According to the *Life*, the enterprise seems therefore to have followed an exclusively Armenian agenda supported by the Arsacid dynasty for the internal promotion of the Armenian identity as a nation between the two major powers of Byzantium and Persia. Certainly, the Greek model appears to have gained the upper hand against the Semitic east, but, curiously enough, the emperor does not appear to have been initially involved in the long search for a writing system for the Armenians, contrary to what happened in the case of Gothic and Ethiopic. But can we completely trust this version of the events?

There are some reasons for questioning this version, at least in its integrity. First, the patriotic stance of the *Life of Mesrop* can hardly be denied, and so the role of the emperor, Theodosios II at the time, in the process leading to the finding of the new alphabet should be diminished. Despite that, and more significantly, the author could not avoid mentioning Mesrop’s trip to the Empire in the final part of his text, for after having taught the Armenians under the rule of the Arsacids...

“... he then thought of the other half of the Armenian nation which was under the rule of the king of the Horoms [Romans]. And he hastened and went with many pupils to the region of the Greeks, and owing to the renown for his good works which had reached there long before, from the northern regions, he received at the very outset of his journey a very sincere and amicable reception from the bishops and princes and

provincials of the land, especially from the commander-in-chief of the area whose name was Anatolis, who transmitted in writing [Mesrop's] design to Caesar, whose name was Theodosius, son of Arcadius, from whom there came an order to accord due honors to the Saint, who was to be called Acoemeti". (trans. Norehad, 1964, §16)

Invited to the Court, Mesrop arrived at Constantinople, where he was enthusiastically welcomed by the Emperor Theodosios II and the patriarch Akakios. After a pleasant stay,

"he explained to Caesar the nature of his needs, and obtained unassailable authorization, along with a *sacra rescripta* bearing Caesar's seal, to gather youths from their half of the Armenian nation for the purpose of instruction." (trans. Norehad, 1964, §16)

A short description follows of Mesrop's missionary activities, where the Armenian hero, provided with *sacra rescripta*, succeeds in winning over the Byzantine Armenians to his cause. Nevertheless, the text of the *Life* puts the stress on evangelisation (naming the Armenian "Borborites" as the target<sup>24</sup>) rather than literary instruction. In any case, Mesrop's missions in Byzantine territory can only mean that the Empire, just as in the case of Frumentius, tried to control the process started by a Christian peripheral nation to acquire its own literature. As Armenia was a buffer state wavering between Byzantium and the mighty Persian Empire, this step towards alphabetisation was obviously very important to attract the land to the Christian west and secure a potential ally against the mighty Sassanids. This could not, however, conjure the invasion from the east, which materialised soon, for in 428 the Sassanid king Bahrain V converted Armenia into a Persian province. The reasons for the annexation remain obscure, although the increasing alignment of the Armenians with the Byzantines must certainly have played a role. And nobody can deny that the adoption of a new alphabet by the Armenians was certainly a symbol of this alignment, for it allowed the Holy Scriptures to be translated into Armenian. Significantly, after the annexation came the breaking with Byzantium, with the Council of Chalcedon of 451.

This leads us to another point. The fact that a new alphabet and the new identity acquired through it could have been felt as a provocation by the Sassanids might perhaps explain why the Armenians took so much trouble and time (so the report in Koryun) in developing a new alphabet,

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<sup>24</sup> Perhaps a Gnostic sect. For their characterisation, see Runciman 1947, 28-30.

for they could not just adopt Greek without risking infuriating their eastern neighbours.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the Armenian script is typologically based on the Greek, for it preserves the same alphabetic order and most of the phonetic value of the Greek letters, but avoids showing this close link visually, as the form of the letters is different.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the Georgian and Albanian scripts, for which we do not possess any plausible historical account, were invented contemporaneously to the creation of the Armenian by Mesrop. In fact, the *Life of Mesrop* attributes the invention of both scripts to him:

“Again, after the passage of some time, the beloved of Christ thought of taking care of the barbarian regions, and by the grace of God undertook to create an alphabet for the Georgian language. He wrote, arranged, and put it in order, and taking a few of his pupils, arrived in the regions of Georgia. And he went and presented himself to King Bakour, and the bishop of the land, Moses. He placed his skill at their disposal, advised and urged them, and they consented to do what he requested. And he found a Georgian translator by the name of Jagha, a literate and devout man. The Georgian king then ordered that youths be gathered from various parts and provinces of his realm and brought to the *vardapet*. Taking them he put them through the forge of education.

[...] Then there came and visited them an elderly man, an Albanian named Benjamin. And he [Mesrop] inquired and examined the barbaric diction of the Albanian language, and then through his usual god-given keenness of mind invented an alphabet, which he, through the grace of Christ, successfully organised and put in order.” (trans. Norehad, 1964, §§15-16)

As no alternative version has been transmitted that could counterbalance the patriotic stance of the *Life of Mesrop*, the Armenian monk has always, although hesitantly, figured as the inventor of the alphabetic tradition of both Georgian and Albanian. Accordingly, the same person would have created the three alphabets from above, that is, through the respective elites of each country.

There were some problems with this account. To begin with, the Georgian alphabet, which is still in use today, is very different in its outlook and structure from the Armenian. Moreover, it was not just

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<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Seibt 2006.

<sup>26</sup> A typological explanation for the creation of the Armenians letters from the Greek alphabet through several intermediate stages is now offered in Mouraviev, 2010, who relies more on theoretical models than on historical context.

typologically but also historically implausible that an Armenian monk could have drawn the alphabet for the rival Georgian nation, which is described in very negative terms in the *Life of Mesrop*. Even more problematic was the very nature of the Albanian script, which was only conjectured through fragmentary inscriptions discovered in Azerbaijan (the historical Albania) and some alphabets copied in later manuscripts. Although modern Udi could be identified as the heir language of ancient Albanian, this was of no avail, for the ancient Albanian alphabet ceased being used early in the Middle Ages.

However, things have changed since the discovery in Mt. Sinai of two palimpsest manuscripts written in the script of the Caucasian Albanians and edited by an international team (Gippert et al., 2009). This allowed Jost Gippert (2011) to make a typological comparison of the three alphabets for the first time in a recent article, where he considers both the alphabetical order of the letters in Armenian, Georgian and Albanian and their numerical value. The results of this approach, which are shown in a detailed table at the end of the article, are very surprising, for it becomes evident that the Georgian alphabet is closer to the Greek model. As this has consequences for the history of the Caucasian scripts, it is worth dedicating a few words to it.

Gippert's table makes it clear that the Georgian letters closely follow the order, as well as the phonetic and numerical values of the Greek letters until the sign *psi* (numerical value 700), where 11 extra signs were added (numerical values 800 to 9000). The Georgian then inserted a final sign (with the numerical value 10,000) based on the Greek *omega* (numerical value 800). That is, every new sign created in Georgian was put at the end of the alphabet in order to preserve the original structure of the authoritative Greek model. The case of Armenian and Albanian was different. The Armenian inserted many new letters at different points, completely altering the numerical value of the original Greek letters. Thus, for instance, whereas *omicron* and *pi* were used for the numbers 70 and 80 in Greek and the corresponding Georgian signs retain this numerical values, the corresponding Armenian letters were already used for the high numerical values 600 and 800 (700 being even taken by a new Armenian letter without correspondence in Greek). The Albanian altered the Armenian order even more, but was based on it.

This typology conferred plausibility to the invention of the Albanian from the Armenian and confirmed the account of the *Life of Mesrop*, although we can surmise that the inventor, rather than Mesrop himself, could have been the Albanian Benjamin who is mentioned to have come to Armenia to get letters for his people. However, in the case of the

Georgian, this same analysis obliges us to rule out the possibility that this alphabet was based on Armenian, for Armenian departed from the Greek model that was faithfully preserved in the Georgian. Now, the contrary appears to be possible, that is, Georgian, which closely followed the Greek pattern, provided the model for Armenian. This is all the more plausible because there are common characteristics in the Georgian and the Armenian letters that could not have arisen independently from each other and that are easily explained if both alphabets were somehow related.

This apparent impasse can be solved by following a recent suggestion made by Werner Seibt (2011). Seibt took into account the fact that the oldest testimonies of the Georgian alphabet are some mosaic inscriptions preserved in a Georgian monastery near Bethlehem and some graffiti in the Annunciation church in Nazareth, the latter dating before the year 427<sup>27</sup>. According to Seibt, it appears possible that the Georgian alphabet was invented in the area of Syria and Palestine by anonymous Georgian monks who were perfectly aware of the contemporaneous endeavours of their Armenian neighbours with whom they perhaps shared the space of the monastery. In fact, the Georgian graffiti are preserved next to Armenian ones.

Going beyond Seibt, one could inversely argue that, conscious of the progresses made by the Georgians, it was Mesrop who started his enterprise as the Georgian alphabet is typologically closer to the Greek. In any case, it is surprising that the Georgian and Armenian graffiti in the Holy Land are of such an early date,<sup>28</sup> not only because they reveal an astonishingly precocious pilgrimage, but also and mainly because they are samples of script made by private hands in a period when both Caucasian alphabets were supposedly being implemented and hence in an embryonic phase.

As a result, one should perhaps not rule out the possibility that the process to create the Georgian and Armenian alphabets could have been more tortuous than the clear-cut exposition of the *Life of Mesrop* would seem to suggest. In fact, the detailed report of the *Life*, including Mesrop's travels to Syrian lands, might have been concocted in order to counterbalance other accounts closer to the truth and perhaps less

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<sup>27</sup> Tarchnisvili, 1995 dates the mosaic inscriptions of the monastery of Saint Theodore in Bir el-Qutt near Bethlehem to the sixth century, mainly basing on palaeographical considerations, for the identity of the persons mentioned in one inscription (such as an abbot called Antony) is not assured.

<sup>28</sup> See Tchekhanovets 2012, 457-465, for an overview of the Georgian graffiti in Nazareth and Sinai.



advantageous to Armenian patriotism.

Unfortunately, we lack any reference to a possible inventor of Georgian letters, who could have promoted an adaptation of the Greek alphabet to write his own language. Whoever he was and wherever he conceived the adaptation, he must have relied on the support of some Georgian prince, exactly as Mesrop did. And this prince probably acted also in connection with the Romans. From a solely typological point of view, a good candidate would be prince Bacurius of Georgia, who is mentioned in many sources of the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> c., and acted as a general under the emperors Valens and Theodosios I.<sup>29</sup> Although usually considered a pagan because of one letter Libanios addressed to him (n<sup>o</sup> 1060, ed. Foerster, 1921-1922), Bacurius could have later converted to Christianity for he visited the Church historian Rufinus several times in his monastery at the Mount of Olives and was the source of the historian's account of Georgia's conversion to Christianity. At the end of this account, Rufinus tells us:

“That this happened was related to us by that most faithful man Bacurius, the king of that nation who in our realm held the rank of *comes domesticorum* and whose chief concern was for religion and truth; when he was *dux limitis* in Palestine he spent more time with us in Jerusalem in great concord of spirit”. (Rufinus X.11, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1999, trans. Amidon, 1997, 23)

We will probably never know who invented the Georgian alphabet or who the prince was that supported him in this endeavour. But a person such as Bacurius fits in perfectly well with the requisites needed by such a candidate, who, among others things, required the sanction of Christian Rome. In fact, Peter the Iberian (c. 411-491) the supposed founder of the Iberian monastery near Bethlehem was presented as grandson of Bacurius in his Greek Life, written by his disciple John Rufus and preserved in Syriac.<sup>30</sup> And a Bacurius is mentioned in the inscription of this monastery, although, as we saw, it probably dates from the sixth century.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hoffmann 1978, 314-317.

<sup>30</sup> See the English translation by Lang 1956.

<sup>31</sup> Tarchnisvili 1995, 137-138.

## 6. Coptic

The prestige and influence of the Greek in Egypt since Hellenistic times progressively led its inhabitants to adapt the simple Greek alphabet to write their own language. However, it would not be until the 4<sup>th</sup> c. that the so-called Old-Coptic alphabet, which still had large numbers of letters of demotic origin, was substituted by the Coptic alphabet, which included a main type (which was employed almost everywhere and comprises up to 92 percent of the total samples considered) and 13 minor variants.<sup>32</sup> All these Coptic alphabets are in essence an adaptation of the Greek alphabet to which only some few autochthonous signs were added. The paternity of its constitution, in contrast with other cases previously considered here, is not claimed by any single person, as the process developed naturally from the bilingual – not to say trilingual, if we include Latin – background of Roman Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is not by chance that the standardisation of the Coptic alphabet took place in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. with the Christianisation of the Roman Empire. Contrary to the cases considered hitherto, however, Egypt was not a peripheral land for Constantinople, but perhaps the most important region for the sustenance of the Empire's economy. This importance, along with the millenary cultural tradition and the network of Egyptian cities and villages, made Egypt a very special case and the emergence of a national Christian literature an almost obvious process, which did not require any intervention or control by the authorities. In fact, no single Greek (or Latin) source refers to the person of long-lived abbot Shenoute (346/347-465 AD),<sup>34</sup> the leader of the monastic White Monastery in Sohag and the person who was able to create national Coptic literature through his writings and by founding a well endowed library, which attracted thousand of visitors. Before his time, Coptic writing was confined almost entirely to Coptic translations from the Greek Bible, with Coptic literature being firmly established after him. Unfortunately, the loss of the library with most of the original works by Shenoute has made it very difficult to assess the impact his project had on contemporaries until recently.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For details, see Kasser 1991a and 1991b.

<sup>33</sup> An overview in Sidarius 2008.

<sup>34</sup> For his life, see Emmel 2004, 6-14.

<sup>35</sup> See now Emmel 2004 for the reconstruction of Shenoute's literary output. Recent studies on the life, rules and organisation of the monastic community of Shenoute, such as Layton, 2007 and 2008 or Emmel 2008a and 2008b do not tackle the problem of literacy.

Moreover, the only *Life* of Shenoute, supposedly written by his disciple Besa and centred on the miracles performed by the saint, is deceptively uninformative from this point of view.<sup>36</sup> It is however clear that for a while monasticism and literacy became synonyms in the Egyptian world because there are no works of Coptic literature outside the monastic circles before the 6<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>37</sup> This can only mean that the establishment of the Coptic identity began in rural areas, whereas the cities were still dominated by Hellenic literature. This sort of cultural splitting explains both the silence of the Greek sources about the emergence of the Coptic literature and the fact that it could develop more or less undisturbed by the local imperial authorities.

## 7. Nubian

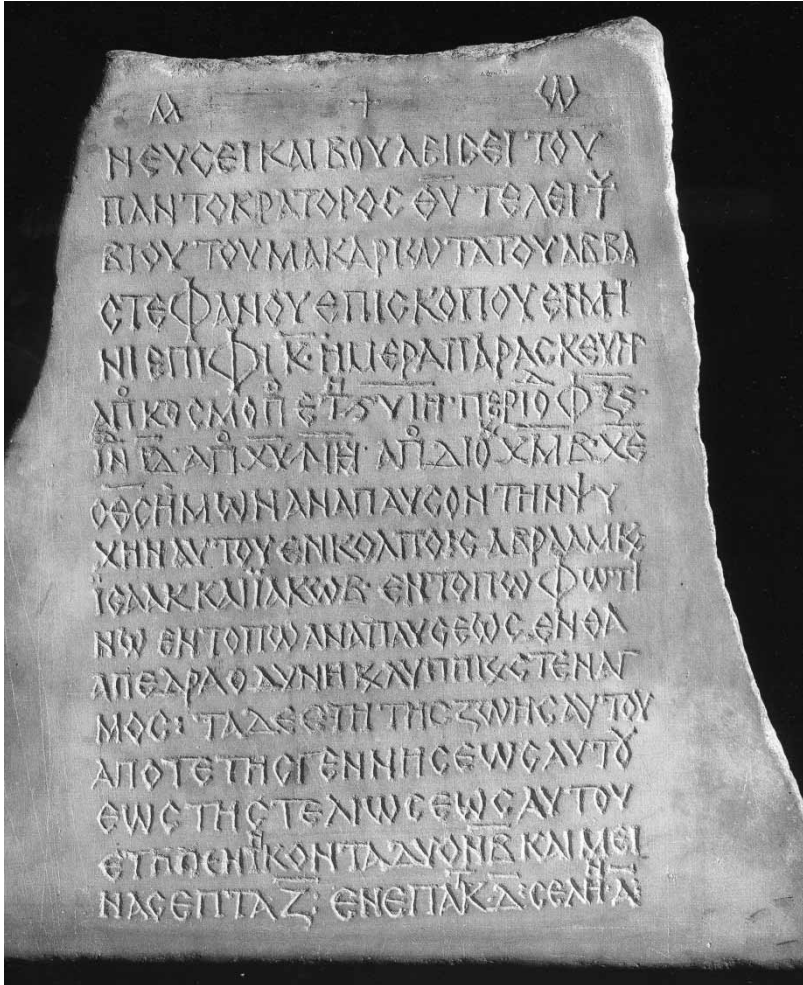
There is a void of a century before we get again, in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> c., detailed information about the existence of new missions at the borders of the Empire which lead to the appearance of new Christian literatures. One special case is represented by Nubia, located between Ethiopia, which was already Christianised in the 5<sup>th</sup> c., and Coptic Egypt. It may perhaps appear just a question of time that Nubia was attracted to the Christian Commonwealth, as the flourishing trade through the Upper Nile lands and the Red Sea towards Egypt continued to attract the nations of Northeast Africa to the Roman orbit. However, contrary to what their northern (Copts) and southern (Ethiopians) neighbours did, the Nubians adopted both the Greek language and alphabet for liturgical and representative purposes. Certainly, Coptic and Old Nubian were also written during the early and later medieval period, and especially Coptic was also used as official language along with Greek. But this did not diminish the importance of Greek, which was studied, copied and inscribed until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some six hundred years after the Arab conquest of Egypt that isolated Nubia from the Byzantine Empire. Moreover, many graffiti written in Greek have even been preserved, and, although they present a large number of mistakes, what matters is the astonishing persistence of the use of the language in a context far away from

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<sup>36</sup> For an English translation, see Bell 1983.

<sup>37</sup> Sidarius 2008, 188.

Figure 3. Funerary stele in Greek of Bishop Stephanos, dated to the 14th July of 926, found in the cathedral of Faras, Nubia (Warsaw, National Museum, inv. nr. 234.646), from Seipel, W. (2002) (ed.), Faras, *Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstensand*, Vienna, 104.



the Greek mainland.<sup>38</sup> Nothing could be more revealing about the symbolic meaning attached to the Greek letters as a mark of identity for a people who for centuries struggled for independence against Islam.

In his *Church History*, the monophysite leader John of Ephesus (ca. 507-588 AD)<sup>39</sup> preserved a very detailed account of the conversion of the kings of Nobatia and Alodia to Christianity along with their nobles around 545 and 569 AD. Understandably, both rulers were interested in participating in the advantages of the “Religion of the Book”, but again, as in the case of Ethiopia in Constantius II’s time, the missions sent by Alexandria triggered the reaction of Constantinople. In the first mission in Nobatia, the northern Nubian kingdom, it was now the Monophysism of the missionaries sent by patriarch Theodosios of Alexandria that alarmed the Chalcedonian emperor Justinian. In fact, Theodosios had been deposed as patriarch in 536 and remained under arrest in Constantinople for the rest of his life.<sup>40</sup> But despite being in the capital, where John of Ephesus probably met him, he did not cease intervening in the affairs of the Egyptian Church. As John tells us:

“Among the clergy in attendance upon pope Theodosios, was a presbyter named Julianus, an old man of great worth, who conceived an earnest spiritual desire to christianise the wandering people who dwell on the eastern borders of the Thebais beyond Egypt, and who are not only not subject to the authority of the Roman empire, but even receive a subsidy on condition that they do not enter nor pillage Egypt. The blessed Julianus, therefore, being full of anxiety for this people, went and spoke about them to the late queen Theodora, in the hope of awakening in her a similar desire for their conversion; and as the queen was fervent in zeal for God, she received the proposal with joy, and promised to do every thing in her power for the conversion of these tribes from the errors of idolatry. In her joy, therefore, she informed the victorious king Justinian of the purposed undertaking, and promised and anxiously desired to send the blessed Julian thither. But when the king heard that the person she intended to send was opposed to the council of Chalcedon, he was not pleased, and determined to write to the bishops of his own side in the Thebais, with orders for them to proceed thither and instruct them, and plant among them the name of the

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<sup>38</sup> An overview of the Nubian kingdoms in Welsby 2002, especially 236-241 on languages used in Nubia both spoken and written. For beautiful reproductions of the frescos of the Faras cathedral as well of some Greek inscriptions of Nubia see also Seipel 2002.

<sup>39</sup> For his life see Ginkel 1996, 27-37. The book contains the best assessment of John’s work, mostly written in Constantinople.

<sup>40</sup> His works are published in *Patrologia Graeca* 86.

synod.” (*Church History* IV.6, ed. Brooks, 1935-1936, trans. Payne Smith, 1860)

We see again, as in the case of Frumentius, how the individual initiative of a certain Julianus is immediately sponsored by the imperial authorities, most prominently by the monophysite empress Theodora. However, Theodora’s Chalcedonian husband, the Emperor Justinian, being alarmed at the possibility of a monophysite missionary in Nubia, “sent thither, without a moment’s delay, ambassadors with gold and baptismal robes, and gifts of honour for the king of that people, and letters for the duke of the Thebais, enjoining him to take every care of the embassy, and escort them to the territories of the Nobadae”. As the queen learnt his plans beforehand, according to John of Ephesus, she sent another letter to the duke ordering him to entertain the embassy of Justinian and clear the way for her own emissary so that he should arrive first in Nubia. The duke, whose life was threatened by Theodora, obeyed and delayed the imperial mission so that Theodora’s emissary could arrive first to the Nubian king and accomplish his conversion to Christian monophysism along with his nobles. When Justinian’s ambassador arrived later with gifts, the Nubian king had already made a statement of his allegiance to the monophysite patriarch Theodosios and dispatched him away. Thus, Julianus could remain undisturbed in the territory for two years, and when he parted, his task was continued by a bishop of the Thebais, Theodore.

The history may perhaps surprise the uninformed reader, for it appears strange that the empress could impose her will over the emperor. But there are other instances of the influence Theodora had in the empire and there is no reason to suspect the main lines of the account.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, it may have been not only difficult, but highly inconvenient for the emperor to convert the Nubians to the Chalcedonian faith, for the future success of the mission depended on establishing regular contacts with the overwhelming monophysite Church of Egypt. Thus, the emperor might have resigned to take the lead in the missions to the Upper Nile valley for the sake of the Empire; a pragmatic decision not unlike the one that made him appoint precisely the monophysite John of Ephesus to lead the

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<sup>41</sup> Opinions are divided about the real power of Theodora. Evans 2002, thinks that Theodora and Justinian simply shared roles, whereas Pazdernik 1994, or Foss 2002, stress that the empress could not but comply to the will of her husband. See also Signes Codoñer 2003 and 2005a, who argues for the influence of Theodora on the decisions taken by Justinian, for which there is enough evidence in the sources, including the *Secret History* of Prokopios.

missions in western Asia Minor to convert the last pagans. The missions lasted from 542 until 567, two years after the death of Justinian and John was able to convert tens of thousands pagans in Caria, Phrygia and Lydia.

Constantinople continued to hold this pragmatic approach to the missions well after the reign of Justinian. In fact, although the missions in Nobadia were interrupted for a while after 551 and again later following the death of Justinian in 565, the monophysite Longinus, who had been appointed by the late patriarch Theodosios as bishop of the Nubians (*Church History* IV.5 and 8), came back to Nobadia as a missionary from 567 to 575. Despite his clear monophysite stance, Longinus did not cease to seek the imperial sanction for his activity, as is told by John of Ephesus, who appears in the report as witness of a imperial reception:

“Longinus meanwhile prevailed upon the king of that people to send an ambassador to the king of the Romans [Justin II] with presents, and gifts of honour. And on his arrival, he had an audience, and was honourably received in the presence of myself and the rest of the court, and spoke highly of Longinus, saying, “*Though we were Christians in name, yet we did not really know what Christianity was until Longinus came to us.*” And much more he related, greatly to his honour; but the king retained a bitter feeling against him, though he said nothing”. (*Church History* IV.8)

This did not prevent further troubles, for later there was a repeated break in the mission due to internal problems in the monophysite Church. Longinus came back to Nubia in 580, but now he preached among the Alodians, a southern kingdom, for, as John of Ephesus says:

“...when the people of the Alodaei heard of the conversion of the Nobadae, their king sent to the king of the Nobadae, requesting him to permit the bishop who had taught and baptized them, to come and instruct them in like manner.” (*Church History* IV.49)

It is not necessary to detail here all the vicissitudes of this further mission of Longinus, which began after being summoned by the Nobadians for preaching among the Alodians: everyone interested can read the minute report made by John of Ephesus.<sup>42</sup> It suffices for us here to say that this second mission was also a success, and this despite some attacks led against the missionary by the king of Makuria, to the west margin of the Nile, who even attempted to hinder Longinus’s arrival in

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<sup>42</sup> See also Adams 1991a and 1991b, for a short report of the missions.

Alodia.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, however, in this second mission in Alodia there are no more references to embassies to Constantinople, suggesting that the affairs were from then on managed at a regional level. In his account, John preserved some letters that had been exchanged between the kings of Nobadia, Alodia, Longinus and the patriarch of Alexandria, but not a single one addressed to the emperor. Although this correspondence was probably written in Greek, John is also silent on this point as well as on the alphabetisation of the territory. He stresses, curiously enough, the demands of “church furniture” by the newly converted Nubian kings, but we must surmise that a more powerful instrument for the conversion was undoubtedly the appeal of literacy. The thousands of Greek inscriptions and graffiti found in the Nubian dessert from this period onwards are proof enough of the attachment of the people to the Byzantine Commonwealth.

## 8. Arabic

The Arabic script has an obscure history before the emergence of Islam that is only recently coming to light.<sup>44</sup> Being a dialect of what is usually called “North Arabian”, Old Arabic language was rarely written before the 6<sup>th</sup> c. and did not have its own script. This is in contrast to what happened to “Ancient North Arabian”, the other main dialect continuum of “North Arabian”, of which thousands of public inscriptions and graffiti have been preserved in both the settlements of the oases and among the nomads. The reason for these different attitudes towards literacy is tentatively linked by Michael Macdonald with the eastern origins of the speakers of Old Arabic, for in antiquity there was always a remarkable lack of inscriptions in the eastern half of the Arabian peninsula. It could also be that these speakers of Old Arabic progressively got used to literacy only after they moved west and settled by the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. in the area of the old Nabataean kingdom in north-west Arabia. In fact, a variant of the Aramaic was used in the Nabataean kingdom as the prestige written language from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD and continued to be so for some centuries after the annexation of the

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<sup>43</sup> The chronicle of John of Biclar (Mommsen, 1894, 211-220) refers under 569 (the third year of the reign of Justin II) that the kingdom of Makuria was converted into Christianity: “Maccurritarum gens his temporibus fidem Christi recepit” (212). Whether this is a mistake or not, it does not seem likely that the Makurians attacked the monophysite missionary because they had already converted to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy, as has sometimes been suggested.

<sup>44</sup> The exposition that follows is based on Macdonald 2010b, esp. 16-22. For the characterisation of the North Arabic dialects, see Macdonald 2004.



territory to the Roman Empire in 106 AD, when Greek also began to be used for official records. Slowly, however, Old Arabic “intrusions” in texts written in the Nabataean kingdom appeared. Moreover, recently compelling and sound evidence has been obtained that the Nabataeans spoke Arabic, even though they wrote in Aramaic. Macdonald (2010b, 20-21) concludes therefore that “face-to-face political, administrative, and legal activity was conducted in Arabic; but when records or written communication were needed they were made in Aramaic”. The consequences this has for the origin of the Arabic script are self-evident:

“It is now clear that the Arabic script was not created *ex nihilo* or consciously adapted from another writing system, but is simply the latest form of the Nabataean script. As the Aramaic language came to be used less and less in Arabia, and Arabic at last started to be used for writing, the Nabataean script came to be associated with Arabic rather than with Aramaic, which is why we think of its latest phase as the “Arabic” script.” (Macdonald, 2010b, 20-21)

The Arabic script originated therefore in Northwest Arabia during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries according to the epigraphist.<sup>45</sup> But what about the historical circumstances that caused the sudden appearance of a new (last variant) of the Aramaic alphabet for writing Arabic? Macdonald (2010b, 21) says that: “developments in a script tend to be pushed by writing in ink, not carving on stone”, and adds:

This means that we have to assume an extensive, and possibly increasing, use of writing on soft materials in the Nabataean script throughout the fourth to seventh centuries, since only this could produce the transitional letter forms and ligatures we see first in the “Nabataean” or “transitional” graffiti of the fifth century [...], then in the early Arabic inscriptions of the sixth and seventh centuries, and the earliest Arabic papyri of the mid-seventh. This would also explain how a more or less consistent and apparently widely understood system of dots to distinguish between letters with the same form, could already have been in use by the first dated Arabic papyrus of 22 AH and the first dated inscription of the Islamic period. (24 AH) (Macdonald, 2010b, 21)

The Arabic alphabet was therefore conceived for writing documents on papyrus, which implies some kind of administration. It probably

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<sup>45</sup> See also the other contributions printed in Macdonald 2010a, especially Nehmé 2010, as well as Macdonald 2009, and Nehmé 2009.

developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. during the period of the supremacy of the *foederati* Salihids as allies of the Byzantines in precisely this area. A monograph by Irfan Shahîd (1989) contains all the evidence collected so far about this Arab tribe, which faithfully defended the Roman frontiers of Syria and Arabia for the whole 5<sup>th</sup> c. following the conversion of its phylarch Zokomos to Christianity probably during the reign of Arkadios (395-408 AD)<sup>46</sup> (Shahîd calls them “fanatic Christians”). Although we do not know for sure whence the Salihids came before establishing themselves in southern Syria and the Nabataean realm, what matters now is that a Christian buffer state allied to the Byzantines is again the starting point for developing a national literary culture. Unfortunately, we do not have many sources on the 5<sup>th</sup> c. and tread only a firmer ground in the sixth, after the Ghassanids substituted the Salihids as the leading *foederati* during the reign of Anastasios. This new Arabic tribe, again of uncertain origins but of staunch monophysite convictions, became an essential piece in the defence of the whole eastern frontier against the Persians and their allies, the Arab Lakhmids, and this despite the fact that the relations with the Chalcedonian Justinian and his successors were strained from time to time. The monumental work of Shahîd (1995-2010) in four volumes recollects all the available evidence not just for the political history and the diplomatic exchanges between Ghassanids and Byzantines, but also, and most importantly, for the cultural background. Particularly interesting is the short section devoted to the Arabic script (Shahîd, 1995-2010, vol. II, part. 2, 297-302),<sup>47</sup> from which it is worth quoting the following passage:

“The two most important surviving sixth-century inscriptions are Ghassanid. One is secular: the Usays inscription of 529, written by Ibna al-Mughira, a military commander detailed by the Ghassanid king Arethas to take charge of a fort. The other is contextually ecclesiastical, though written by a Ghassanid phylarch; it was carved in a church dedicated to St. John in Harran in Trachonitis. The two inscriptions evidence the involvement of the Ghassanids in the development of this Arabic script, involvement that is explained by two main factors. First, sixth-century Oriens contained energetic kings and bishops who were aware of their Arab identity; especially influential were Arethas and Theodore, who controlled federate Oriens between 540 and 570. Even more relevant to the

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<sup>46</sup> The source is Sozomenos, *Church History* VI.38.14-16: λέγεται δὲ τότε καὶ φυλὴν ὄλην εἰς Χριστιανισμὸν μεταβαλεῖν Ζωκόμου τοῦ ταύτης φυλάρχου ἐξ αἰτίας τοῦ αὐτοῦ βαπτισθέντος etc. For a dating of the episode, see Shahîd 1989, 4-6.

<sup>47</sup> The section further explores the possibility that Arabic calligraphy had its roots in the Ghassanids.

development of the script is the spread of monasticism and the proliferation of monasteries in the Oriens of the Ghassanids. The same monks who were actively producing texts must have been chiefly responsible for the final development in pre-Islamic Arabic script. [...] These monks in Ghassanid monasteries who were involved in the study of ecclesiastical literature and in translation possessed texts written in Syriac, the prestigious lingua franca of Semitic *Oriens Christianus*. It is natural to suppose that when these Arab monks expressed themselves in Arabic, they were influenced by the much more developed Syriac script – the script of the Peshitta, of St. Ephrem’s œuvre, and of other Syriac texts. The likelihood of this influence strengthens the argument that this style of the Arabic script developed in Oriens not from Nabataean but from the Syriac version of Aramaic.” (Shahîd, 1995-2010, vol. II, part. 2, 297-302)

Whether we accept the influence of the Syriac in the origins of the Arabic script or not,<sup>48</sup> this does not change anything about the crucial role of Christian monasticism in developing literacy among the Christian nations. The amount of evidence collected by Shahîd about the missionary zeal of the Ghassanids and about some of his main figures, prominently Theodore, bishop between ca. 540 to 570 AD, is compelling and leaves no room for doubt.<sup>49</sup>

Certainly, nothing is known about the possible role local Byzantine authorities could have had in this process to create the national Arabic literature. Considering the later emergence of Islam, one could think that the Empire did wrong in allowing its Arabic allies to acquire a national identity. But, in fact, it can be argued the other way round that it was precisely because the Arabic script was created by Arab Christians that Islamic culture was so tolerant towards Christians and Jews, who were considered “peoples of the Book” closely related to the new religion preached by Muhammad – this in sharp contrast to the attitude of Islam towards Iranian Mazdeism. In fact, a Christian legend recently studied and analysed in its variants by Barbara Roggema (2009)<sup>50</sup> told of a Syriac monk called Sergius or Bahira, the teacher in matters of religion of a young Muhammad, who met him in the town of Bosra (the capital of the

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<sup>48</sup> For this view, see Briquel-Chatonnet 1997, who argues for the Syriac origin of the Arabic alphabet by pointing to the similarities in the ductus between Syriac and Arabic in face of the Nabatean. He warns against considering alphabets as isolated corpus of signs and calls for analysing them as a coherent whole.

<sup>49</sup> Shahîd 1995-2010, vol. I. part 2, 788-792, 806-808; vol. II, part 1, 164-182; vol. II, part 2, 291-296.

<sup>50</sup> Roggema dates the final version of the legend to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> c.

Ghassanid kingdom!) when he visited it while accompanying the caravan led by his uncle Abu Talib. Whatever credit we give to this legend, one could say that “se non è vero, è ben trovato”. In any case, if in the first years after the conquest Islam was welcome among Syrian inhabitants, who saw in it a way to free themselves from the yoke of Constantinople, this is not explained just by ethnic, but also and mainly by cultural and religious affinities.<sup>51</sup> On the other side, it is highly significant that Islam, and particularly the Umayyad caliphs, employed precisely members of the Salihid and Ghassanid tribes in the administration of their territories.<sup>52</sup>

## 9. South Arabian

Whereas the Ghassanids were proselytising in North Arabia, the kings in Ethiopia were concerned about the situation of Yemen, for the territory, which controlled the Aden Strait, was crucial for maintaining the trade routes between India and the Roman Empire. When the king of Yemen (Himyar) killed Roman merchants passing through his territory (probably in 523), apparently in retaliation for the persecution of Jews in the Roman Empire (for Jews were very influential in south eastern Arabia), the Ethiopian king of Aksum declared war on him, invaded the country (probably with the help of the Roman fleet), killed the Yemenite king and imposed a Christian sovereign in the area. This is considered the start of a Christian presence in southwest Arabia that lasted until the Persian occupation of the land in 570 through their Lakhmids allies.

The facts of this period are muddled, for the several sources preserved, belonging to different periods and cultural traditions, contain contradictory reports and even great confusions in the chronology.<sup>53</sup> Thus, according to the so-called Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (which in this part is largely based on the lost part of the *Church History* of John of Ephesus), the Ethiopian king, called here Andug but most commonly known as Kaleb or

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<sup>51</sup> For a complete review of the sources on Christian and Muslim relations in the first three centuries after the Arab invasion, see Thomas and Roggema, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Gutas 1998, 17-18, states “it would be desirable to do a complete prosopographical study of all these functionaries”.

<sup>53</sup> For the historical background, see the documented summary of Fiaccadori 2006. The most detailed Greek source is Prokopios, *Wars* I.19-20.

Elesboam,<sup>54</sup> promised to convert to Christianity if a victory was granted to him, so that when the victory came:

“he did not delay in fulfilling his vow, but sent two of his nobles to the emperor Justinian asking that he would send him a bishop and clergy. The emperor rejoiced greatly and gave orders that a bishop, whomsoever they chose, might be given to them. The envoys searched and found a man, a paramonarios<sup>55</sup> of the church of Saint John [*in Alexandria*], whose name was John, who was celibate, chaste and zealous in faith. They asked for him and obtained him. They took him with them, together with numerous clerics, and departed. Rejoicing they returned to their country. When they arrived before Andug, their king, he received them, also with great joy, along with the bishop and the priests who had come with them. The king was instructed in the faith, was baptized and became a Christian together with all his nobles. They were eager that all the regions should become Christian and that churches be erected in them to the glory of the true God of the Christians”. (Chabot, 1933, 56; trans. Witakowski, 1996, 52)

This text is apparently unaware of Frumentius’ mission in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. and presents Ethiopia’s conversion to Christianity as a consequence of this campaign against Yemen.<sup>56</sup> The significant point, however, is that, in contrast to the Nubian missions, it is now the Emperor Justinian himself who takes care of the embassy. This meddling of the emperor is even more relevant in the newly established Christian kingdom of Yemen, especially under the reign of Abraha, the second sovereign who ruled there after the expedition of the Aksumite king Kaleb/Elesboam. According to the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, Abraha sent an embassy to Justinian, asking for new consecrated bishops for Yemen, but when he learned that Theodosios, the monophysite patriarch of Alexandria, had been deposed, he did not accept a bishop from the Chalcedonian representative there.<sup>57</sup> This situation went on for a time as the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, based on the report of John of Ephesus, explicitly reveals:

In this same time there was great trouble for the kingdoms of the Ethiopians, Himyarites and Indians, because of a lack of priests. Every

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<sup>54</sup> Ellesboam and Kaleb are alternative names for this king, the most famous Ethiopian ruler of the period. See Fiaccadori 2006, 59-60 and note 74 regarding the variants.

<sup>55</sup> A monastery warden.

<sup>56</sup> For the confusion, see Fiaccadori 2006, 63-64.

<sup>57</sup> See the lengthy account of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. Chabot 1933, 56-69; trans. Witakowski 1996, 52-64.

year they sent envoys with great honours to the emperor Justinian asking him to give them a bishop who would not accept the Council of Chalcedon. They tried to persuade him with many arguments; he, however, since he fought on the side of the Council, advised and admonished them to accept a bishop from the patriarch who stood by the Council and lived in Alexandria. They, however, were obstinate, saying they would not accept any Chalcedonian but only somebody who should not have accepted the Council. But he gave orders that their wish should not be met. Thus they returned empty-handed, but every year the envoys from these three kingdoms came and went for approximately 25 years, until priests disappeared and were no longer found among these peoples. (Chabot, 1933, 111; trans. Witakowski, 1996, 100-101)

The *Chronicle* further makes the stubbornness of Justinian responsible for the disappearance of consecrated bishops in Ethiopia and Yemen after repeated attempts and embassies. This interpretation (especially the reference to the 25 years) is suspect, but in any case reflects well that it was in the interest of the two powers to preserve a formal agreement in matters of credo. Nevertheless, according to John of Ephesus in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, in the end the three peoples proceeded to appoint their own bishops, thus transgressing canonical rules.

Gianfranco Fiaccadori thinks that the above-mentioned paramonarios John could have been one of them and even suggests that Saint Gregentios, the “archbishop of the Homerites” (that is, of the inhabitants of the Himyar) known through a Greek *Life*, passes also into this context.<sup>58</sup> In fact, the protagonist of the Greek *Life of Saint Gregentios*, a text recently thought to have been composed in Constantinople in the 9<sup>th</sup> c. from three different sources,<sup>59</sup> is a legendary figure unattested elsewhere. However, the events in which he took part in Yemen, mentioned in the last part of the biography (the most reliable), perfectly fit in with the context of the development of a national Church in Yemen during the reign of Justinian. Obviously, the Greek *Life* presents a picture of peaceful harmony within Orthodoxy and makes of the missionary Gregentios a Chalcedonian, but the reality must have been somehow different. It is not necessary, though, to surmise that the Yemenites elected their bishop without the approval of Constantinople, as Fiaccadori suggests. Rather I would think of a compromise in view of the repeated attempts of the Yemenites, mentioned by John of Ephesus, to obtain “orthodox” bishops from Constantinople.

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<sup>58</sup> Fiaccadori 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Berger 2006, 44.

In any case, King Abraha of Yemen is very well known because of his failed expedition against Mecca mentioned in the Quran; an act that can be interpreted as part of an aggressive policy in Arabia led in interest of Byzantium. Most importantly for us, Justinian sent marble and Syrian craftsmen for the mosaics of the big cathedral built in San'a ca. 544-549. We do not have evidence as to whether the Christianisation of the land – which had failed because of the above-mentioned Lakhmid conquest in 570 – promoted literacy in the South Arabian alphabet that was regularly used for a good number of dated inscriptions of the period, some of which even mention King Abraha himself (for instance, as repairer of the famous Marib Dam).<sup>60</sup> However, it is not a random guess that the “religion of the Book” also promoted copies of the Holy Bible among the Christian subjects of the Yemenite king.

More significant even is the fact that in the manuscript tradition, along with the Greek *Life of Saint Gregentios*, the text of the so-called *Laws of the Homerites* has been copied and contains a kind of legal code for the whole reign of Yemen. Although the text was supposedly written by Gregentios himself, it was actually composed in Constantinople in the 10th c.<sup>61</sup> The *Life*, where mentions to written records and letter exchanges are frequent, links this *Code* with an administrative reform in which γειτονάρχαι or administrators of districts (recalling the ones in Constantinople) are involved. Gregentios ordered the king that the *Code* “should be copied to a great number of other volumes, so that every *geitonarches* should possess his own copy”.<sup>62</sup> We would never have known how this Christian Yemen would have evolved had it not been invaded by the Persian allies. But the model would probably not have differed too much from the cases considered above.

## 10. Glagolitic and Cyrillic

During the crisis of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Empire struggled for its own survival and no new mission among the neighbouring nations was undertaken. But with the economic and military recovery in the 9<sup>th</sup> c., the missionary activity again gained momentum. And, as in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. with the Goths, the Balkans were anew the main target for evangelisation. Now the Slavs occupied the field. Particularly, the conversion of the Bulgarian

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<sup>60</sup> Fiaccadori 2006, 67-68 and 75-76.

<sup>61</sup> Berger 2006, 82-91.

<sup>62</sup> Berger 2006, 446-447.

kingdom since its establishment south of the Danube was of vital importance for the Empire and the expansion of the Christian Commonwealth. The Bulgarian khans had started using vulgar or vernacular Greek in inscriptions already in the 8<sup>th</sup> c., although most of the records were carved during the reigns of khans Krum and Omurtag, at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. These so-called proto-Bulgarian inscriptions, edited by Beševliev (1963), dealt with a wide range of subjects, such as victory proclamations or treaties with the Byzantines, funerary or memorial inscriptions, *res gestae*, inventory lists....<sup>63</sup> This provided some appearance of stately organisation to the new state, but the corpus of these texts, although very interesting from a linguistic point of view, is the clearest evidence of the low standards achieved by the khans, who could only resort to untrained native Greek engravers of Bulgaria with a defective knowledge of the standards of the written language.<sup>64</sup>

The lesson to be learned was therefore clear: without belonging to the Christian Commonwealth no jump to a wholly literate status was possible. This circumstance and the longstanding cohabitation with the Byzantines led to the baptism of Khan Boris around 864 (852-889), who then adopted the Christian name of Michael in recognition of the Emperor Michael III, who had sponsored his conversion to Christianity. Almost at the same time, scarcely a year earlier in 863, the famous apostles of the Slavs, Constantine-Cyril and Methodios, the two brothers of Thessalonike, had arrived at the court of Prince Rastislav of Moravia (846-869/870). The Moravian kingdom lay far away from Byzantium in Central Europe, but after the disappearance of the Avar khaganate at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> c. following the campaigns of Charles the Great, many Avars became subjects of the Bulgarian Empire, which conquered their lands and reached the borders of the Moravian realms.<sup>65</sup> All central Europe from the Sudetes to the Rhodope mountains had turned into a missionary field for the Byzantines. During his first tenure of office (858-867), the patriarch Photios was the mastermind behind the project, which unavoidably led to a conflict with the west and the Papacy. The last large missionary enterprise of the Byzantines meant in fact the beginning of a new European order.

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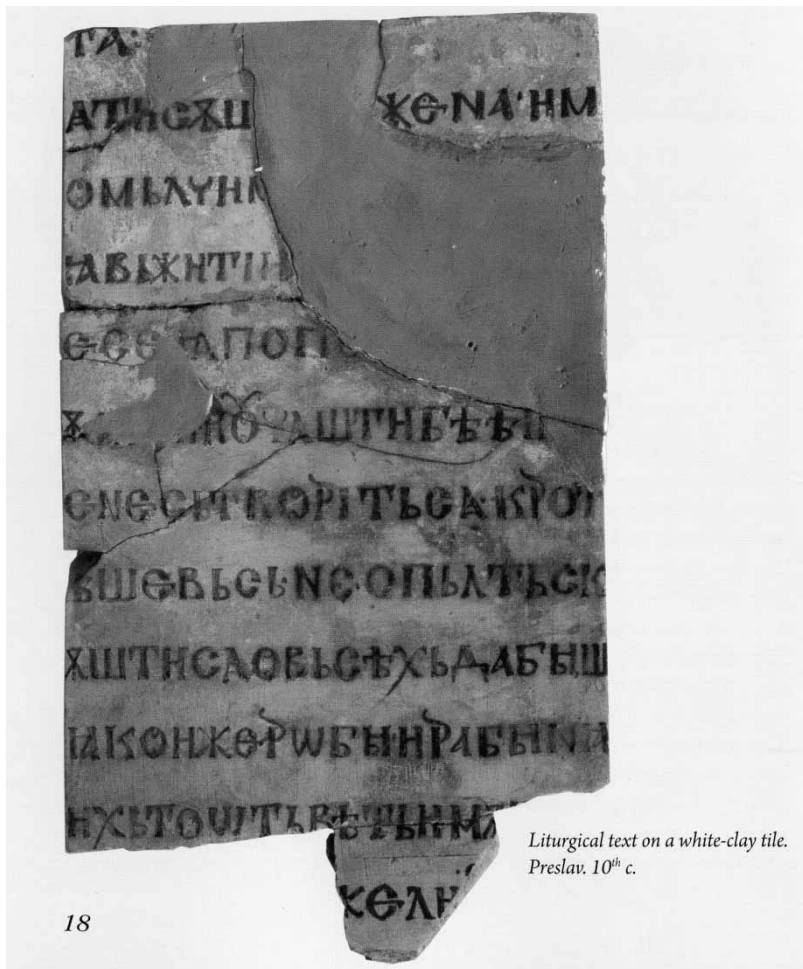
<sup>63</sup> A short overview with recent bibliography in Sophoulis 2012, 44-47.

<sup>64</sup> A few inscriptions are significantly Turkic but written in Greek script. For them see Pritsak 1981, 38-60.

<sup>65</sup> Pohl 1988.



Figure 4. Liturgical text in Cyrillic on a white-clay tile from Preslav, dating to the tenth century, from Hadzhiev K., Karadimitrova K. and Melamed K. (2011) (eds.), *ЪГРЪЩА, SCRIPSI, АЗ ПИСАХ*, Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 18.



The details of these missions are well known and it is not our purpose to go into them here.<sup>66</sup> The fact that the emperor and the patriarch oversaw the whole process is what matters for us now, for it confirms that the model to extend the Christian Commonwealth followed the same patterns as in the period before the Arabic and Slavic invasions. In fact, the complete translation of the Bible into Slavonic was reportedly done by Methodios in Constantinople during his stay there in 882-883 at the invitation of Emperor Basil I, when Photios was at the height of his power.

However, it is perhaps interesting to dedicate a few words to the two alphabets that were developed by the Byzantine missionaries to record Slavonic, namely Glagolitic and Cyrillic.<sup>67</sup> Except for the oldest manuscripts and inscriptions themselves, the most important source for the origin of the alphabets is the treatise *An Account of Letters* written by the Bulgarian monk Hrabar (or Chrabr), which contains a defence of the right of the Slavs to have their own script. The text was written at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 10th c., accordingly not much after the events it refers to. Hrabar, who significantly links the acquisition of a script by the Slavs with the Christianisation of Bulgaria, mentions that before the invention of the Slavic script, Greek and Latin alphabets were occasionally used in an unsystematic manner to write the Slavic language; a practice that is encountered in the proto-Bulgarian inscriptions, where Greek letters are occasionally used for registering Bulgarian names. Hrabar, however, noted that certain sounds of Slavic could not be appropriately rendered by Greek letters.

Therefore, combinations of Greek letters might have been used to represent the Slavic sounds (as is usual in Greek when referring to Slavic words), but Constantine-Cyril, leading the Byzantine mission in Moravia, preferred to invent a whole new set of signs instead of adapting the Greek letters, the so-called Glagolitic alphabet, dated by Hrabar to the year 863.<sup>68</sup> There is a never-ending discussion among scholars about the models from which Glagolitic letters took their shapes.<sup>69</sup> But it is clear that the structure

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<sup>66</sup> For the missions, see the classic overview in English of Dvornik 1970. For the biography of the apostles, see now the summaries of Lilie 1998-2013, #3.927 (for Cyril) and # 4975 and 25.062 (for Methodios), with bibliographical references. Dvornik 1948 still remains the best narrative of the so-called “Photian Schism”.

<sup>67</sup> The best account of the creation of the alphabets is Koch 2006, whom I am following here.

<sup>68</sup> For the dating, see Lomagistro 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Koch 2006, 165-169, with bibliography. See recently Strakhov 2011, for Ihor Ševčenko’s appealing hypothesis who suggested that the marginal reference signs

of the Glagolitic alphabet was based on the Greek. We can only speculate about the reasons for avoiding Greek letters for the new script, but it is not unlikely that Greek missionaries tried to avoid using a script that resembled Greek too closely. Indeed, as they competed with Latin missionaries, this could have been no minor point for giving the mission an appearance of independence from the Byzantine power.<sup>70</sup> We already mentioned in §5 a similar reason behind the forms adopted for the Armenian script. On the other hand, it is to be considered whether the two brothers were completely unaware of previous uses, however inconsistent, of the Greek alphabet for writing Greek.

In any case, the Glagolitic conceived for Moravia was short lived there, for Methodios and his disciples were banished from the country in 885-886. They settled then in Bulgaria, although it was in the western half of the country where the Glagolitic script developed during the 10th c.; the period from which our oldest witnesses date. From there it entered Croatia, where it was to last for centuries, even with Papal approval.<sup>71</sup> Contemporarily, in eastern Bulgaria, in the cities close to Preslav (the new capital of the Bulgarian Empire since 893), the Cyrillic alphabet developed during the reign of Symeon the Great (893-927), son and heir of Boris-Michael. This cannot be coincidental, for Symeon, who had spent his young years (ca. 878-888) studying in the Byzantine capital, not only spoke Greek fluently, but also knew Greek literature well. Liutprand of Cremona tells us that Symeon studied in a Constantinopolitan monastery as a novice and learnt Greek rhetoric so well through Demosthenes and Aristotle that he came to be considered *εμιαργον*, that is, a “half-Greek”. Nevertheless, Symeon was finally obliged to abandon the “artium studia” and return to his country when he was called upon to assume his power.<sup>72</sup> But, as Runciman puts it,

“If the statesmen at Constantinople had hoped that the accession of the ‘half-Greek’ meant the revival of their influence in Bulgaria, they were

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of Greek patristic *catenae* were the ultimate source of inspiration for the Glagolitic signs.

<sup>70</sup> See Runciman 1930, 140: “But when he arrived in Moravia, where anything suggesting Greek propaganda was deeply suspect, he found his alphabet a liability, and began again, arbitrarily distorting the Greek letters, to disguise their origin, and generally elaborating the whole affair.”

<sup>71</sup> Franolić and Žagar 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Liutprandus, *Antapodosis*, book III, ch. 29, ed. Chiesa 1998. For Symeon’s Byzantine education and background, see Shepard 2006, 141-145.

sadly disappointed. Symeon's devotion to Greek literature only had the effect of making him wish for it to be translated into the vernacular. The decade following the official adoption of the Slavonic language and alphabet bore an amazing crop of literature. The Bulgarian people, long restricted in their writing to Greek characters and language or perhaps a few runic signs, suddenly had found a means of expression". (Runciman, 1930, 137)

The alphabet promoted by Symeon was not the "foreign" Glagolitic, but what we now call Cyrillic, based mainly on Greek letters and therefore friendly to Greek eyes. As happened with the Glagolitic, the Cyrillic also included additional signs to represent Slavic phonemes for which no Greek letters were available. Likewise, Cyrillic appears to have been the result of a single creative act, rather than of evolution from previous adaptations of the Greek alphabet, as no "protocyrillic" inscription has been preserved which would imply a transitional stage between the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets.<sup>73</sup> However, the inventor of Cyrillic, whoever he may have been,<sup>74</sup> followed the Glagolitic model, for two new signs were inserted in both at the same point of the alphabetic list and thus gave a new common numerical value to the final sequence of the letters; a very important clue to establish dependences between alphabets, as we saw in the case of the Caucasian scripts in §5.<sup>75</sup>

It can therefore be concluded that the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed by Symeon for no other reason than its closeness to the Greek model, which undoubtedly constituted the cultural reference in the Balkans. This was especially relevant for him not only as ruler of the Bulgarians, but also as pretender to the imperial throne of Constantinople after 924, when he styled himself "emperor of the Bulgars and Romans".<sup>76</sup> As a result, the

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<sup>73</sup> Koch 2006, 171-172.

<sup>74</sup> The *Life* of Clemens of Ochrid, one of the most famous disciples of Methodios, written by the bishop of Ochrid Demetrios Chomatenos (1216-1234) attributes to the saint the invention of another set of letter forms "clearer than the ones invented by Cyril" (ἑσφορίσατο δὲ καὶ χαρακτηριστῆρας ἐτέρους γραμμάτων πρὸς τὸ σαφέστερον ἢ οὓς ἐξεῦρεν ὁ σοφὸς Κύριλλος), ed. Milev, 1996, ch. 14. Although Clemens appears to have been linked with the diffusion of Glagolitic, it cannot be ruled out that the "clearer" letters designed by him are those of the Cyrillic.

<sup>75</sup> Koch 2006, 172-175.

<sup>76</sup> Needless to say, this imperial ambition was heavily criticised by the Byzantines; see especially letter 5 of Theodore Daphnopates (ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 1978), who ridiculed this double imperial title as nonsensical. Shepard (2006, 141-145) considers however that "it is not certain that Symeon was intent on seizing the

graphic continuity of the Cyrillic with the Greek was politically more advantageous for him than the rupture symbolised by the Glagolitic, as Cyrillic somehow promoted the membership of the Bulgarian kingdom to the Byzantine Commonwealth. A further evidence for the importance of the link with the Greek is the fact that Symeon continued to use Greek for seals and acclamations. Moreover, Christian Hannick (1993, 931-933) has adduced cogent reasons for supposing that the prime language of church services continued to be Greek during the 10<sup>th</sup> c. until the very disappearance of first Bulgarian Empire in 1015, although admitting some degree of slavisation in the liturgy.

In any case, the increasing support given by the Bulgarian rulers to the Cyrillic explains that this, and not the Glagolitic resisting in western Bulgarian, was the alphabet the Kievan Rus' adopted after the conversion of Vladimir in 988.

## 11. Sardinian

The island of Sardinia remained attached to Byzantium during most of the 10<sup>th</sup> c., even after the Islamic conquest of the Balearics at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>77</sup> An ἄρχων Σαρδανίας is mentioned in the famous treatise *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae* composed by order of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos.<sup>78</sup> The strategic position of the island and its relations with Byzantium in the 10th and 11th c. have been object of recent and detailed research, mostly encouraged by archaeological finds.<sup>79</sup> It appears evident that despite the Sardinian Church belonging to the See of Rome, the sense of membership to the Byzantine Commonwealth, at least among the Sardinian rulers, cannot be denied and lasted until the Byzantine presence in South Italy ended in 1071, with the capture of Bari by the Normans.

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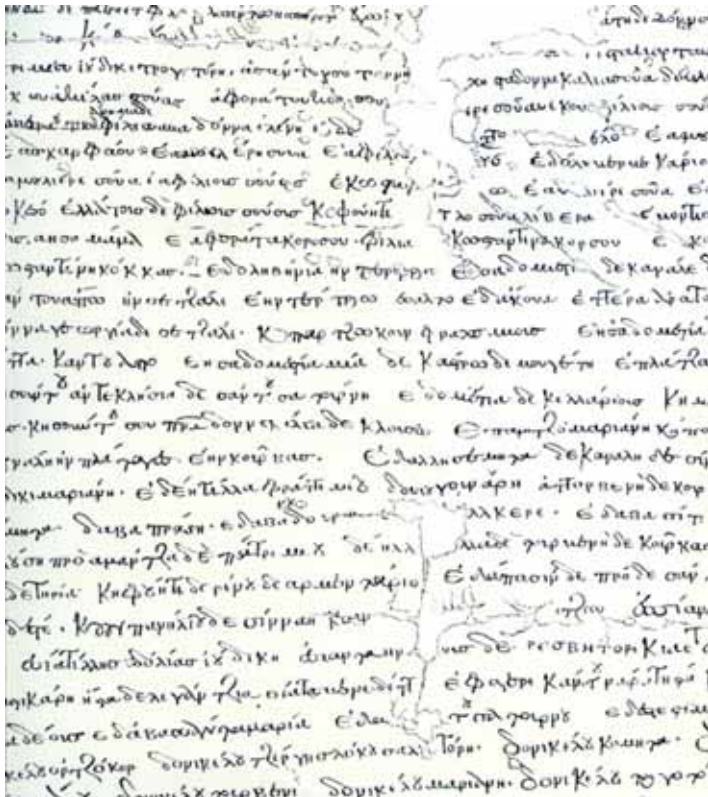
Byzantine throne and permanently occupying Constantinople even then”, for he should have realised the impracticability of such an enterprise. This does not change anything about the ideological framework behind Symeon’s rulership, which could not admit plain subordination to the Christian capital of the Byzantine Commonwealth.

<sup>77</sup> See Signes Codoñer 2005b and 2007 with bibliography.

<sup>78</sup> Reiske 1751-1754, vol. II, ch. 48.

<sup>79</sup> See especially Corrias and Cosentino 2002, and particularly Cosentino 2002.

Figure 5. Sardinian written in Greek alphabet in a document preserved in Marseilles, Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 1.H.88, n.427, from the cover of Corrias, P and Cosentino, S., (2002) (eds.), *Ai confini dell'impero. Storia, arte e archeologia della Sardegna bizantina*, Cagliari.



Curiously enough, the possible regular use of the Greek alphabet for recording Sardinian, the romance dialect of the island, has attracted comparatively less attention of the scholars. There is some reason for this, as the main evidence for the use of Greek for writing Sardinian is a single document, the so-called *Carta sarda in caratteri greci* preserved in Marseilles (Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 1.H.88, n.427). The document contains the donation made in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the judge Costantino Salutio of Cagliari to the Marseilles monastery and church of Saint Saturno, which was ruled by Benedict monks. There are no other contemporary documents from this time, so it is

difficult to ascertain how extended the use of the Greek alphabet was among the “Sardinian judges” (or *giudicati*, the heirs of the Roman *iudices provinciae*) who ruled the island from ca. 900 until 1420, when the island was sold to Aragon. The fact that other documents of approximately the same period have been preserved in later Latin copies has led most of the scholars to think of the Marseilles document as being a rarity. However, Ettore Cau (2000) has recently suggested on the base of transcription errors that these later copies might have been based on Greek originals. This could explain why almost all the originals were systematically rewritten in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. Whilst written in Greek until the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> c., these Greek documents were useless in the 13<sup>th</sup> in an increasingly Latinized milieu, which, moreover, no longer appreciated the prestige acquired through the Byzantine connection. Significantly, whereas all the original Greek documents were translated into Latin and recopied in order to be understood, the original seals were preserved in order to guarantee their authenticity. Only the peripheral document preserved in Marseilles seems to have escaped from the destruction brought on by the rewriting process. If this conjecture is true, it would once again prove the persistent use of the Greek alphabet at the borders of the Byzantine Commonwealth that is unrelated to the effective political control of the land and, as in the Nubian case discussed above in §7, instead represents the stark irradiation of Byzantine culture and ideology among the Christian nations of its most distant borders.

## 12. Epilogue

The overview made in the previous pages makes it clear that the creation of new national alphabets and literatures in the peripheral areas of the Byzantine Empire cannot be considered a random process that simply arose out of an increasing difficulty of the eastern half of the Empire to impose Greek cultural tradition among the nations subject to it. Obviously, the Empire was not strong enough to demand from all its peoples uniform submission to the cultural patterns decided in Constantinople. However, this may be precisely the reason why, after the ruinous experience of the never-ending civil wars of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. since the advent of Christianity, a more flexible – and economical – model was sought in an attempt to attract the periphery to the centre, certainly by promoting national identities, but at the same time by preserving a common sense of membership to a Christian *oikoumene*. The reign of Constantius II, as the cases of Gothic and Ethiopic prove, seems to have been pioneering in establishing this new Byzantine Commonwealth by favouring the

emergence of new Christian literary nations. But the same patterns continued to be practised under his successors mainly during the reigns of Theodosios II and Justinian I whenever the opportunity arose, and this was mainly in the areas of the Middle East and Red Sea. The effort made by Justinian to overcome the differences between Monophysites and Chalcedonians, although undoubtedly a failure in the long term, was however part of the same conception of looking for a minimum consensus for the unified Christian Commonwealth, which would allow facing the ‘real’ enemy, the Persians, more effectively. The Persian intervention first in Yemen in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. and in the whole Middle East in the 7<sup>th</sup> during the reign of Herakleios (610-641), as well as the ensuing Islamic conquest put a provisory end to these attempts to expand the Byzantine Commonwealth. But after the dark centuries, when Byzantium emerged again from the crisis, the model was reused successfully again and again, with the new nations of the periphery now situated mainly on the western Balkan borders of the Empire. The best evidence that the Byzantines were perfectly aware of the importance of promoting literacy and a national Christian identity among their allies is provided by a well-known passage of the Slavonic life of Constantine-Cyril we can quote here to close this research:

“When the Philosopher was in Venice bishops, priests and monks swarmed upon him like crows on top of a falcon, and referring to the trilingual heresy said to him, “Tell us, thou, how come you now have written books for the Slavs and are teaching them? Those were not found earlier by anybody else – neither apostles nor the Pope of Rome, nor Gregory the Theologian, or Jerome, not even Augustine? We know but three languages by which to worship God in books – Hebrew, Greek and Latin!” To which the Philosopher replied: “Does God not send his rain upon all us equally? Does not the sun shine upon us all too? Do not all breathe the air in the same way? And you are not ashamed to decree only three languages (Hebrew, Greek and Latin), deciding that all other peoples and races should remain blind and deaf! Tell me: do you hold this because you consider God is so weak that he cannot grant it, or so envious that he does not wish it? Why, we do know many peoples, they all know the books and worship God in their own language. These are all known to us – the Armenians, the Persians, the Abasgians, the Georgians, the Sogdians, the Goths, the Avars, the Turks, the Khazars, the Arabs, the Copts, the Syrians and many others”. Speaking courageously these and other words the Philosopher embarrassed them and left”.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Life of Constantine, ch. 16, based on the French translation by Dvornik 1969, 375



The passage is interesting for several reasons. Firstly because it contrasts the generosity of Byzantium with the strictness of the west, which in fact admitted only Latin as a vehicular language for liturgy (with only marginal “tactical” concessions, as for instance to the Slavic in Croatia) and remained practically unshaken in this view until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Secondly, because it includes among the list of new national Christian literatures peoples other than those we have considered hitherto, for instance the Sogdians of Central Asia,<sup>81</sup> the Balkan Avars<sup>82</sup> or even the Turks and Khazars of the Russian steppes, which were precisely preached by Constantine according to his *Life* (ch. 8-12) and converted to Judaism in the 9<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>83</sup> And lastly and most importantly, because it reverses previous arguments and considers that the granting of a new script is not an evidence of weakness but of strength, for this is what Constantine states when he asks rhetorically: “Do you consider God is so weak that he cannot grant it?”. Perhaps this is exactly the approach we must follow in the future when dealing with the emergence of new Christian alphabets in the periphery of the Byzantine Commonwealth.

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<sup>81</sup> For them see Tremblay 2011.

<sup>82</sup> There was probably not an official language of the multilingual Avar Empire, and we cannot even exclude that Slavic was lingua franca, as stated by Pohl 1988, 223-225.

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed overview on the Arabic, Hebrew and Greek sources concerning the Khazar conversion, see Dunlop 1954, 89-170, 194-196. For the date, see more recently Kovalev 2005, and Golden 2007. The *Life of Constantine*, ch. 8 mentions that Constantine found the Gospel written with “Russian letters”, meaning probably the runes, when he arrived in Cherson.

# SYNESIOS OF CYRENE AND THE DEFENCE OF CYRENAICA

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## 1. Introduction

Synesios was born around 370 A.D. His life spread through the reigns of Valens, Theodosios the Great, Arkadios and Theodosios II, until his death in 412 or 413 (Lacombrade, 1951). He lived, therefore, some of the most important events of Late Antiquity, as the destruction of the Serapeum of Alexandria, the division of the Empire after the death of Theodosios, the invasion of the Goths of Alaric, Gainas' alliance with Tribigild, the earthquake in Constantinople or the inrush of the Huns in the Empire under their King Uldin.

But Synesios was not a mere spectator of the events that shook the Eastern Empire. He belonged to one of the noblest families of the Libyan Pentapolis, whose mythical origins dated back to the Heraclides (*Catast.*, I, 1572 b). The prestige of his family was hereditary, as well as his immense patrimony. And with both, Synesios had a great political influence beyond Cyrenaica. C. Lacombrade wondered if this influence would reach the court of Constantinople (1951, 15) where he had friends. One of them, Olympios, had been his classmate in Alexandria, under the teachings of Hypatia, with whom he had a close relationship reflected in his correspondence (*Ep.*, 10; 15; 16; 46; 81; 124; 154). Besides this philosophical education, he learned all those political and rhetorical skills that a man of his position had to have, since he was intended to be part of the ruling elite of Cyrenaica.

In 399 Synesios was ambassador of Cyrene in Constantinople, where he remained until 402. Three years later he returned home and married. At the same time, the *Ausuriani* barbarians' arrival meant an imminent threat to the Pentapolis (Roques, 1987).

## 2. The advent of the Ausurians<sup>1</sup>

Archaeological, epigraphic and literary surveys show the western provenance of the attacks that the Cyrenian territory had been receiving since the Marmarika wars of the third century to the arrival of the Ausurians in fifth century. First, the highest concentration of fortifications in Cyrenaica was located in the area of Sirte, a region that constituted a desert *limes* of Syrian or Numidian type<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the testimony of

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<sup>1</sup> According to J. Desanges 1962, 289, the *Ausuriani* mentioned by Synesios are the same “tribu ou confédération” (1962, 82) that the *Austoriani* referred to by other sources as Amnianus Marcellinus. Their first appearance in history seems to take place under the reign of Jovian (*CIL*, VIII, 16.328).

<sup>2</sup> Most of the fortifications of Cyrenian territory were identified in the 1950s by R. G. Goodchild, who noticed the importance of the border area near Sirte. Starting from the edge of the plateau inwards Bu Grada, there is an extensive group of small ditched forts, whose centre is Gasr el-Atallat (Goodchild 1952, 147). The westernmost outpost within the confines of Cyrenaica was a small unditched fort situated on a hillock at Bir Umm el-Garanigh, near the legendary site of the Altars of the *Philaeni*, where the borderline with Tripolitania was placed (Goodchild 1952, 146). In this area there are fortifications as Bir-Umm el Garanigh or Marsa Brega (ancient *Kozynthion*). In addition, in the hill of Ras Ben Yauad, Goodchild found a fort that he identified as the *Zacasama praesidium* that appears in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (1952, 146). From Marsa Brega to Benghazi there were two important caravan routes protected by fortifications; one was heading for Sin Agan (ancient *Krokodeilos*), and the other to Agdabiya, identified by Goodchild as *Corniclanum* (1952, 147-148), with watchtowers as the one located in Gasr el-Heneia. Besides these fortifications, scattered along the two caravan routes and approximately 50 kilometres on either side of Sirte, there are many farms established in the coastal belt, much of them fortified. These are focused on the area of Marsa Brega and Agdabiya to Benghazi (Goodchild 1952, 145; 1953, 67). Also around Ghemines, the ancient *Chaminos*, there was a large number of rough fortified places protecting settlements of native character. In this area a more formal type of fortress is provided by Gasr-Haddumah, near El Magrun. Then, forming a western line from the proximities of the coast, across the steps of the interior, towards the southern part of the plateau, were located the forts of Zauia el Tailimun, Esh-Sheleidima and Zawiet Msus, forming a line that probably marked the innermost defences of the Syrtic *limes* (Goodchild 1952, 148; 1953, 67). At the north of the line formed by these three forts, existed a series of smaller fortifications disposed almost to reach Benghazi. These were scattered on the coastal plains between Benghazi and Ptolemais, protecting the growing areas of the fertile plain of Merg, where the fortress of Gasr-Geballa in El-Benia stands out for its large size and dominant position in the junction of the valleys. Also in this area

Ammianus Marcellinus placed the Ausurians in Tripolitania towards 350 (XXVIII, 6)<sup>3</sup>, where they are referred to as devastating Africa “more harshly than usual” (XXVI, 4, 5)<sup>4</sup>, events that were repeated in the 363/364 (XXVII, 9, 1)<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, inscriptions corroborate subsequent military actions over the barbarians, definitely defeated between 408 and 423 by the offensives led by the governor of Tripolitania Fl. Ortygius, remembered in an epigraph for achieving “*Asturianorum furore repraessa*” (IRT, 480)<sup>6</sup>.

The testimonies, therefore, indicate that between 350 and fifth century the *Ausuriani* were in Tripolitania. However, around 405 Synesios places them in the territory of Cyrenaica (*Ep.*, 41, 62, 69; 69, 5; 78, 6, 33; 108, 11; 122, 4; 125, 2; 132, 17 and 133, 21), carrying out two waves of attacks in the years 405-407 and 411<sup>7</sup>. The most reasonable explanation for their presence in this area in those dates is given by D. Roques, who claimed that they were “populations barbares du Sud tunisien qui s’étaient alliées à Gildon et faisaient les frais de leur choix” (1987, 274-275). His hypothesis is supported by the title of the *Codex Theodosianus* VII, 19 (“*De saturianis et subafrensibus et occultatoribus eorum*”)<sup>8</sup>, referring to the

some ruins of fortified churches have been found (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 2003, 397).

<sup>3</sup> “*Hinc tamquam in orbem migrantes alium, ad Tripoleos Africanae provinciae veniamus aerumnas, quas, ut arbitror, Iustitia quoque ipsa deflevit, quae unde instar exarsere flammaram, textus aperiet absolutus. Austoriani his contermini partibus barbari, in discursus semper expediti veloces, vivereque adsueti rapinis et caedibus, paulisper pacati, in genuinos turbines revoluti sunt hanc causam praetendentes ut seriam* (Amm., XXVIII, 6, 1-2).

<sup>4</sup> “*Hoc tempore velut per universum orbem Romanum bellicum canentibus bucinis excitae gentes saevissimae limites sibi proximos persultabant; Austoriani Mauricaeque aliae gentes Africam solito acrius incursabant.*” (Amm., XXVI, 4, 5).

<sup>5</sup> “*Africam vero iam inde ab exordio Valentiniani imperii exurebat barbarica rabies, per prokursus audentiores et crebris caedibus et rapinis intenta quam rem militaris augebat socordia et aliena invadendi cupiditas maximeque Romani nomine comitis* (Amm., XXVII, 9, 1).

<sup>6</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus referred to the Ausurians in similar terms when he reported the “*rabies*” of these barbarians who ravaged Tripolitana (*vid. supra*).

<sup>7</sup> While traditional historiography has considered that the Ausurians staged three invasions over Cyrenaica, we prefer the D. Roques’s hypothesis (1987), which argues that the war dated in 395 had not occurred, and the onset of the hostilities must be located in 405.

<sup>8</sup> “*Impp. Arcadius et Honorius aa. Messalae praefecto praetorio. Saturianorum coniurationem armis sumus, ut oportuit, persecuti. Sed aliquot ex eis imminentis poenae evitacione ad diversa semet latibula contulerunt, quorum occultores huic*

participation of the Ausurians in Gildo's revolt. So we can state that the Roman repression to Gildo's forces<sup>9</sup> caused that Berber groups who supported him "*in diversa fugerunt*" (Oros., VII, 36); it seems that the *Ausuriani* decided to flee towards the East, to the Cyrenaica. The situation of the defences of this place was crucial to the development of subsequent events.

### 3. The regular army and the defence of the Cyrenaica

#### 3.1. Military administration

Diocletian's reform of the year 297 had divided the old province of Egypt into three new administrative units: "*Aegyptum ipsam et Thebaida et Libyam*"; then proceeded to a new subdivision, "*ab Aegypto Augustammicam et Pentapolim a Libya sicciore disparatam*" (Amm. XXII, 16, 1). However, the defence of the three provinces remained jointly entrusted to an only *dux Aegypti Thebaidos utramque Libyarum* (AE, 1934, 7-8<sup>10</sup>;

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*severitati sciant se esse subdendos, ut hae possessiones, in quibus latebram collocaverint, fisci nostri corporibus adgregentur, nisi protinus post edicti huius auctoritatem poenae ac legibus fuerint restituti. 2. Simili etiam se condicione retinendum esse cognoscat, si qui e subafrensibus, qui in saturianorum se coniurationem miscuerunt, quempiam praeviderit occultandum. Quisquis igitur huiusmodi hominem adversus salubris decreti auctoritatem existimaverit latebris subtrahendum, sciat sibi cum eo facinus esse commune, et si eiusmodi personae fuerint, quae multari rerum amissione non possint, proprii capitis luendum esse supplicio. 3. Nec hi sane poenae se exsortes futuros esse credant, qui deprehensos in quolibet rure tantorum scelerum machinatores silentio praetermiserint et non statim sub publica testificatione, quibus in locis inventi fuerint, publicaverint. 4. Id quoque observandum esse censemus, ut ad ea loca, quae a memoratis latronibus tenebantur, diligens dirigatur inspector, oblaturus primitus veteribus dominis, ut, si haec possidere desiderant, ne abductis maereant cultoribus, translatis aliunde familiis rura, quae huc usque infructuosa apud eosdem perditorum temeritas fecisse videbatur, exerceant, vel certe, si inconvenientia existimaverint, salva tributorum praestatione ad idoneos possessores transferant. Dat. XIII kal. aug. Theodoro viro clarissimo cons." (C. Th. VII, 19, 1).*

<sup>9</sup> The repressive measures following this African revolt were numerous, and included the confiscation of the properties of the *comes Africae* Gildo (C. Th., VIII, 8, 7; 9; IX, 42, 16; I, 5, 12), in addition to the creation of a *comes Gildoniaci patrominii* for its management (N.D. Occ. XII, 5).

<sup>10</sup> *Aurelius Maximinus vir perfectissimus dux Aegypti et Thebaidos utrarumque Libyarum* (AE 1934, 7-8). By creating the Diocese of Egypt in 381 both *Libyae*

*PLRE*, I, 579 and 770), resident in Alexandria. Unfortunately the loss of Chapter XXX of the *Notitia Dignitatum* prevents us from knowing the units under his command.

Nevertheless we have some information for the reign of Theodosios. First, a papyrus of the year 338 (*Pap. Lips.* 63) lists the sending of troops to Pentapolis, most likely to dissuade their citizens from supporting the usurper Maximus (Wipszycka, 1966, 358-360). Second, the *Berlin Papyrus Inv.* 13943 refers to the *annona* of some troops sent from Egypt to Pentapolis to deal with the usurper Eugenios. It seems, judging by these testimonies, that in the time before the attacks of the *Ausuriani* the Cyrenaica had no permanent strong defences. Neither, as we have said, enjoyed autonomy with regard to its military administration. On the days when Synesios writes, however, Egypt and Libya already have a distinct military organisation:

“On another occasion I made a proposal to abolish the supreme military command in our country, for everybody here agrees that the only remedy for our evils is for the cities to revert to their old government (ἡγεμονία); in other words, that the Libyan cities ought to be put under the prefect (ἀρχοντα) of Egypt.” (Syn., Ep., 95, 80ff).

As stated by D. Roques (1987, 220-222), a military reform must have occurred between 356 and 398 resulting, firstly, in the creation of a *dux Thebaidos* (*PLRE*, I, 1120 and 570) and a *comes limitis Aegypti* (*ND, Or.* XXVIII) for Egypt; and secondly, about the defence of the Cyrenaica territories, we find a single *dux Libyarum* (*ND, Or.* XXX) under whose responsibility both Lower Libya and Libya Pentapolis would be assigned, conceived as a single strategic unit. The residence of the *dux* in Ptolemais (Syn., *Ep.*, 109, 194, 14) shows that the defence of the Pentapolis cities required greater attention from more southern territories.

It seems that the serious situation of Cyrenaica in the late fourth century prompted the Emperor to send a high official of military administration from Constantinople. He is mentioned by Synesios in a series of letters to Herkulianos and Olympios. These letters, dated prior to the embassy to Constantinople from 399 to 402, contained brief allusions to a *comes*:

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have a single *dux* for their military rule. In 470 *Libya Pentapolis* already has its own *dux* (*Cod. Iust.* XII, 59, 10).

“You wrote to me from Ursicinus concerning the *comes*, I mean the one who has been entrusted the command of the troops in our city. You asked that I should cause letters to be written to the *comes* and to the ordinary prefect, by friends of yours who can manage this.” (*Ep.*, 144, 9-12).

This personage had arrived in Pentapolis to assume the role of commander in chief for a short period of time<sup>11</sup>. This would be the *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Orientem* Simplicius<sup>12</sup>, whose friendship with Synesios, the result of which are letters 24, 28 and 130, would have been established during his stay in Pentapolis, sent on a mission due to the exceptional danger of Cyrenaica.

The whole system of military rule for both Libyas remained in place at least until September 443, which is dated in title XXIV of *Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes* (“*De ambitu et locis limitaneis inibi redhibendis*”). In this law the Emperor recommends his *magister officiorum* to pay particular attention to the *limes* regions “of Thrace, of Illyricum, of Eastern, of Pontus and also of Egypt, Thebaid and Libya”<sup>13</sup>. Therefore we

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<sup>11</sup> He should not, according to D. Roques (1987, 221), be identified with Paionios, member of the court of Constantinople and the addressee of Synesios’ treatise *Ad paeonium de dono*, because Synesios would not have known this person until the date of the embassy. The French (Garzya 1989), Spanish (García Romero 1995, 183) and English (Fitzgerald 1926; Lendering 2007) editions of the letters date the *Ep.*, 98 and 99 in 402 or 403, since they do not follow the most recent chronology proposed by D. Roques (*vid. n.* 7). Therefore, the identification of the *comes* with Paionios of Constantinople in these editions do not cause problems of chronology.

<sup>12</sup> We found in the *Codex Theodosianus* several titles addressed to a personage named Simplicius, although certainly not in all cases is the same person. Is not very likely, because the chronology, that the Simplicius that Synesios speaks was the “*Simplicio vicario*” that refers the *C. Th.* IX, 29, 1, dated in 374. Nor the “*Simplicio proconsuli Asiae*” that appears in 396 in the *C. Th.* I, 12, 5, and neither the “*Simplicio praefecto praetorio*” recorded in the *C. Th.* VI, 4, 2. In the *C. Th.* VIII, 5, 56, dated also in 396, appears, no doubt, our “*Simplicio magistro militum*”; he is the “*Simplicio comiti et magistro utriusque militiae*” recorded also in the *C. Th.* VII, 7, 3, from 398. Finally in the *C. Th.* XI, 30, 59, dated in 399, we find a reference to a “*Simplicio praesidi Tripolitanae*”.

<sup>13</sup> “*Id autem curae perpetuae tui culminis credimus iniungendum, ut tam Thracici quam Inlyrici nec non etiam Orientalis ac Pontici limitis, Aegyptiaci insuper Thebaici Libyci quemadmodum se militum numerus habeat castrorumque ac lusoriarum cura procedat, quotannis mense Ianuario in sacro consistorio significare nobis propria suggestione procuret, ut, uniuscuiusque tam industria quam desidia nostris auribus intimata, et strenui digna praemia consequantur et in dissimulatores conpetens indignatio proferatur*” (*C. Th.* XXIV).

are still speaking of a *limes Libycus* applied jointly to both Libyas, and not of a Pentapolis *limes* besides a Lower Libyan *limes*. It is not until 472 that we have, for the first time, in an edict addressed by Leo I to the praetorian prefect (*C. I. XII, 59*)<sup>14</sup> a reference to a “*dux Pentapoleos*”. So, many years after the death of Synesios, between 443 and 472 the new military reform that separated both Libyan administrations was carried out. The reasons are no doubt related to major complications of the situation in Cyrenaica against new attacks from the *Ausuriani* launched shortly before 449, of which Priscus speaks (*Frg. 14*), and that caused the sending of General Amartios and the change of the capital from Ptolemais to Apolonia / Sozousa. The reform entrusted the command of both Libyas, on the one hand, to a *dux Pentapoleos* with residence in Sozousa, and on the other hand, to a *dux Libyae* with residence in Paratoinion, as stated in Edict XIII of Justinian (2, 1), the capital of Lower Libya from the late third or early fourth century.

According to the Edict of Anastasios (*SEG, IX, 356*; cf. Reynolds, 1978)<sup>15</sup> the *dux* of Pentapolis was in command of two types of troops: first, the *καστηρησιάνοι*, that is, the soldiers stationed in the *castra* to guard the *limes*, or *limitanei*; on the other hand, the *ἀριθμοί* or *numeri*, regular soldiers of the Empire established in cities. These were usually organized in battalions, sometimes grouped by two or three in the same locality (Maspero, 1974, 44). With regard to the *dux Libyae*, we know nothing of the troops under his command until Justinian time, when we meet the *Libyens Iustiniani* and the *Paratonitae Iustiniani* (*Ed. Iust. XIII, 2, 1*). In both cases these were new units of *comitatenses* at the disposal of the *dux*.

They seem to be two units, but we could also be facing a collective designation to refer to different regiments (Ravegnani, 2005, 193 and n. 40).

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<sup>14</sup> “*Item scrinii sacrorum libellorum: (...) ducum Palaestinae, Mesopotamiae, novi limitis Phoenices, Osrhoenae, Syriae et Augustae Euphratensis, Arabiae et Thebaidis, Libyae, Pentapoleos, utriusque Armeniae, utriusque Ponti, Scythiae, Mysiae primae, secundae, Daciae, Pannoniae, officii virorum spectabilium comitum Aegypti, Pamphyliae, Isauriae, Lycaoniae et Pisidiae*” (*C. I. XII, 59, 5*).

<sup>15</sup> “ὧ[σ]τε τοὺς καστρ<η>σιανοὺς μετὰ πά<σ>ης ἐπιμελίας / παρα[φ]υλάττιν, καὶ μὴ [σ]υνω]νῆς χάριν τινὰ παρῆέναι ἐπὶ τ[ο]ῦς / βαρβάρους μῆτε τ[ὰ] ἀλλάγματα πρὸς αὐτοὺς τιθ[έν]αι· ἀλλὰ φυλάττιν αὐτοὺς / καὶ τὰς ὁδοὺς ἐπὶ τῷ μῆτε Ῥωμαίους μῆτε Αἰγυπτί[ο]υς μ[ὴ]τε ἑτερόν τ<ι>να δίχα [πρ]οστάγ-ματος τὴν πάροδον ἐπὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους [π]οιεῖ<ν>· [το]ῦς δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ἔθνου[ς τ]ῶν / Μακῶν διὰ γραμμάτων τοῦ λα[μ]προτάτου) πραίφεκτου συγχωρῆσθαι ἐπὶ τὰ χωρία [Πε]ντα-πόλεως παραγίνεσθαι” (*SEG, IX, 356*).



In summary, the increasing military necessities of Cyrenaica in Synesios's time is evident, and they continue to rise with the beginning of the sixth century. Both Edict XIII of Justinian and the fortifications made by the Emperor in Lower Libya and in Libya Pentapolis, of which Prokopios informs (*De Aedif.*, VI, 2), reveal the urgency of improving the defences of Cyrenaica in the context of frequent attacks.

### 3.2. Units of the regular army in Cyrenaica

Despite not having the chapter of the *Notitia Dignitatum* which registered the military units established in Libya, Synesios's work gives abundant information. A synthesis of it supports the idea that there were two types of regular troops in charge of the protection of Cyrenaica: first we find *foederati* o *socii*, integrated into the army *comitatense* (*Ep.*, 78; 87; 110; 132; *Catast.*, I; *Catast.*, II) and, secondly, local troops and, to a lesser extent, foreign troops, which formed corps of *limitanei* (*Ep.*, 79). These were under the command of the *magister militum per Orientem*, or under those of the *duces* or *praepositi limitis*.

Among those soldiers Synesios defined as "foreigners" or "ξένοι" (*Ep.*, 95, 161, 15; 162, 1; 130, 222, 10), the *Unnigardae* are the best positioned. They can be identified as *foederati* o *socii*, although, as we shall see, with some aspects regarding this terminology:

"Nothing could be more advantageous to Pentapolis than to give honor to the Unnigardae, who are excellent both as men and as soldiers, in preference to all the other troops, not only those who are termed native troops, but also all that have ever come into these districts as auxiliary forces.

The truth is that these latter, even when they are much superior to the enemy in numbers, never yet gave battle with courage, but the Unnigardae in two or three engagements, with a handful of forty men, engaged an enemy of over a thousand. Assisted by God and led by you, they have gained the greatest and most glorious victories. The barbarians had scarcely shown themselves when some were killed on the spot and others put to flight. They still patrol the heights, ever on the watch to drive back attacks of the enemy, like whelps springing out from the courtyard, that no wild beast may attack the flock." (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 78, 1-14).

According to A.H.M. Jones, the Unnigardae were sent to Cyrenaica *ca.* 412 to reinforce the defences offered by local *limitanei* against the attacks of the *Ausuriani* (1973, 203), while both Fitzgerald (1926) and A. Garzya (1989) together with the editions of the letters of Synesios that followed them, determine for 411 the testimonies on the presence of the Unnigardae

in Cyrenaica (Syn., *Ep.*, 78; *Catast.* I and II). It seems that from the moment of their arrival these soldiers demonstrated their force in the fight, judging by the accolades that Synesios dispenses them. Regarding to the maintenance of their effectiveness, the bishop laments the decision that results in the integration of the Unnigardae within the so-called “native units”:

“But we blush when we see these brave fellows weeping in the very midst of their strenuous service in our cause. It is not without sadness that I have read a letter which they have sent me, and I think that you also ought not to remain unmoved at their prayer. They make a request of you through me, and of the Emperor through you, which it were only fair that we ourselves should have made, even had they been silent, to wit, that their men should not be enrolled amongst the native units (*ἀριθμοῖς ἐγχωρίοις*). They would be useless both to themselves and to us if they were deprived of the Emperor’s largesses (*τῶν βασιλικῶν δωρεῶν*), and if, moreover, they were deprived of their relays of horses and of their equipment, and of the pay which is due to troops on active service. I beg of you, who were the bravest among these, not to allow your comrades-in-arms to enter an inferior rank, but to let them remain without loss of their honors, in the security of their former position. This might well be, if our most kind Emperor should learn through your representation how useful they have been to Pentapolis.” (*Ep.*, 78, 14-25).

Therefore the Unnigardae, which are defined as allies (*κατὰ συμμαχίαν*), in other words *foederati* or *socii*, were enjoying many advantages that converted them into great warriors, unlike the native troops. Epistle 130 opposes these last to the *ζένοι*, term which in the Byzantine military language is often applied to the foreign soldiers settled in cities. So these foreign soldiers are surely the Unnigardae. They do not seem to be a unit of *foederati* in the exact sense of the word; according to D. Roques, “les Hunnigardes de Synésios ne sauraient être qualifiés de fédérés au sens strict, si l’on convient que les fédérés continuent à servir sous les ordres de leurs compatriotes” (1987, 249). It seems the Unnigardae form a unit of *comitatenses* soldiers integrated in one of the field armies or *comitatus*. As such, they were subject to the immediate orders of one of the emperors or their direct subordinates, in our case, of the *magister militum per Orientem*, but Synesios informs of their actions under the command of the *dux* Anisio (*Catast.* I). In the Edict of Anastasios they are named *ἀριθμοί* or *numeri*. It refers to five units of this type (*SEG*, IX, 356, 5, 8: “τῶν πέντε ἀριθμῶν”), possibly established each one in a city of the Pentapolis.

This type of regular soldiers had their cantonment in town (Jones, 1973, 631-632). In the case of Cyrene, it is very likely that they had a building adapted for their accommodation, the *Caesareum* (Stucchi, 1967, 18; Goodchild, 1971, 44). Generally they constituted an elite army, trained to carry out offensive and campaigns abroad, where the cavalry prevailed. Among these troops were some units specialised in a particular technique of combat, in the case of the Unnigardae riders, they were probably mounted archers (*equites sagitarii*).

These types of troops were recruited initially from a single ethnic group associated with a particular technique of combat. However, as A. Goldsworthy noted, over time, this kind of units often ended up being recruited from any human group available, assimilated into the regular army to be indistinguishable from it (2003, 204). The Unnigardae were related in principle with the *Hunugari* that appear in other sources (Clausen, 1831, 209, n. 5), although subsequently their Hun origin was proposed (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, 225, n. 383). D. Roques defined them as “troupe de cavaliers d’origine hunnique” (1987, 237) and as “garde de Huns”, which, in his opinion, would explain the restricted number (*ibid.*, 248). Apparently the effectiveness of the Unnigardae in their fight against the *Ausuriani* made the Bishop of Cyrene forget his foreign origin which bothered him much at first, having come earlier to propose to the Senate the expulsion of the foreigners from the army (*Ep.*, 95, 73-75)<sup>16</sup>. It seems that, further, his criticism against the integration of the Barbarians in the Empire was limited to the Scythians (*De regno; Ep.*, 95)<sup>17</sup>.

We can date the creation of this battalion of Unnigardae before the death of Arkadios (408), and even during the reign of Theodosios (347-395), since we found in both a policy of integration of the Huns among the *comitatenses* forces of the Eastern Roman army. It seems that the alliance that they established with the Emperor must specify that the Unnigardae

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<sup>16</sup> “But when we had to vote, I proposed for the sake of my native city that the ranks of the army should be closed to foreigners, but he opposed me in the interest of Helladius and of Theodorus. And yet, who does not know that even the most enthusiastic officers lose all their professional spirit, once they are in touch with these foreigners, and they are changed into merchants?” (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 95, 73-75).

<sup>17</sup> In the speech *De regno*, Synesios criticises the integration of the Goths in the Empire, particularly in the army and the Senate: “But the shepherd must not mix wolves with his dogs, even if caught as whelps they may seem to be tamed, or in an evil hour he will entrust his flock to them; for the moment that they notice any weakness or slackness in the dogs, they will attack these and the flock and the shepherds likewise.” (22ff.).

came to form part of the imperial army under the roman command. This treaty would include the enjoyment for the Huns of imperial “largesses” (τῶν βασιλικῶν δωρεῶν) of which Synesios speaks, and that included the changing of horses, weapons and a good salary (*Ep.*, 78, 136).

In addition to the Unnigardae Synesios makes reference to another unit that appears to be composed also by strangers in a letter addressed to his brother, written in 411:

“The man to whom I have given this letter is a paymaster and quartermaster (ταμίας καὶ σιτοδότης) of the Dalmatian cohort (τῶν Δαλματῶν τάγματος). I love all the Dalmatians as if they were my own children, because they are the people of the city to which I was appointed bishop. This is all that I had to tell you. It is for you now to give a welcome to my friends, as if they were your own.” (*Ep.*, 87).

The person that Synesios is recommending to Evoptio is probably one of the regimental quatermasters that distributed the foodstuffs from the storehouses (*horrea*) to the troops, known as *actuarii*<sup>18</sup> (*subscribendarii*, *ὑπομνηματοφύλακες*). These men were not soldiers (Jones, 1973, 626). Regarding this unit of Dalmatians, this must be one of the units of elite auxiliary cavalry promoted by Gallienus, as were the *Equites Promotii*, *Mauri* o *Sagitarii* (Speidel, 2006, 73). Synesios refers to them as a cohort (τάγμας), a term usually applied to the infantry (Soz., IV, 9, 9). On the basis that the majority of the troops listed as “*Dalmatae*” in the *Notitia Dignitatum* were cavalry units<sup>19</sup>, it has been claimed that the Dalmatians

<sup>18</sup> D. Roques warned that the terms used by Synesios to name this post (“ταμίας καὶ σιτοδότης”) were contradictory. On one hand, the word σιτοδότης referred to the *annona*, so the term *annonarius* must be the correct translation; on the other hand, however, the word ταμίας means “responsible”, so it can’t be the *annonarius*, since this constituted a subordinate rank. Since the real responsible for the provisioning of the Dalmatians was the *actuarius*, likely Synesios did not use the correct administrative term to describe the post of this character; he meant, according to Roques, the *actuarius* and not the *annonarius* (1987, 241).

<sup>19</sup> The examples that we have found in the *Notitia Orientis* are numerous: *Equites quinto Dalmatae* (V, 36); *Equites nono Dalmatae* (V, 37); *Equites tertio Dalmatae* (VII, 27); *Equites Dalmatae Illyriciani* (XXXII, 18; XXXIII, 16; 21; 25; XXXVI, 15); *Cuneus equitum Dalmatorum* (XLI, 15; 18; 19; XLII, 14; 21); *Cuneus equitum Dalmatorum Fortensium* (XLI, 17); *Cuneus equitum Dalmatorum Diuitensium* (XLI, 18; 20). We have also found examples in the *Notitia Occidentis*: *Equites Dalmatae Paserentiaci* (VI, 57); *Equites Dalmatae Paserentiacenses* (VI, 175); *Praepositus equitum Dalmatorum Branodunensium* (XXVI, 13); *Equites Dalmatae* (XXXII, 24; 26; 27; 32; 38); *Cuneus equitum Dalmatorum* (XXXII, 30), etc. Faced

mentioned by Synesios could not form a cohort (Roques, 1987, 245), but an *ala* (500 men) or a *cuneus* (50 to 100 men). However, we also find some examples of the word “*cohors*” applied to the cavalry<sup>20</sup>, with whom the testimony of Synesios would just be added as one more. In that case, 500 Dalmatian soldiers would compose this unit, since this was the number to which the cohorts usually ascended. Then we could state that the term “*cohors*” in the late fourth century had begun to be applied not only to infantry but to cavalry formations, so we are referring to a *Cohors equitata Dalmatorum*. It does not seem, in any case, that they were infantrymen, since we found no Dalmatian troops in units of that type. Neither is it likely that they were mounted archers, because no example of *sagittarii* Dalmatians can be found in the *Notitia*. However, the loss of the register of the units stationed in Cyrenaica makes it difficult for us to find a solution to this problem.

Even though normally we find these Dalmatian units commanded by *duces* or *praepositi limitis*, and so constituting *limitanei* troops, they also appear as *comitatenses* soldiers (*ND, Or.*, VII, 27). Indeed, Synesios describes them as “the people of the city to which I was appointed bishop”, so stationed in the city of Ptolemais, which speaks to us about their status as *comitatenses*. We would be talking, as was the case to the Unnigardae, about a specialised unit of cavalry sent by the *magister militum per Orientem* given the difficult situation of the Pentapolis.

Certainly the high mobility and speed of the nomadic groups that, coming from the west, attacked Cyrenaica, must impose the need for mounted troops. The *limitanei* located in the border area were not prepared to deal against such an offensive, and the *comitatenses*, although they have been considered as mobile strategic reserves, capable of moving to where the problems would require, they definitely did not have a higher speed than that of a foot soldier, further limited by the displacement capacity of carts and animals used for transportations (Goldsworthy, 2003, 203). In this context Dalmatian riders, as well as the Unnigardae, must have become true elite troops.

A similar case appears to be the one of the Arab soldiers who are mentioned in epistle 5, with regard to a quarrel that took place between the crew and the pilot of the ship that took them from Azario to Alexandria:

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with this overwhelming majority of *equites Dalmatorum*, we have registered a case of infantry troops of Dalmatians: *Praefectus militum Dalmatorum* (XXXVII, 19).

<sup>20</sup> *Cohors prima equitata* (*ND, Or.*, XXXII, 43); *Tribunus cohortis secundae Dalmatorum* (*ND, Occ.*, XL, 43).

“Despairing of persuasion, we finally attempted force, and one staunch soldier -for many Arabs of the cavalry were of our company (*Αράβιοι συγγοὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ τόγματος ἰππέων*)- one staunch soldier, I say, drew his sword and threatened to behead the fellow on the spot if he did not resume control of the vessel.” (*Ep.*, 4, 95-10).

It seems, by the manner in which Synesios refers to them, that the presence of these Arab soldiers was known by Evoptio, the addressee of the letter. Therefore in 401, when the letter is dated (Long, 1992, 351-380), this unit should have been stationed for some time in Cyrenaica, even though they were doing their transfer to Alexandria<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, they were probably not, at least on those dates, a very numerous group, since Synesios says the crew was composed, together with the twelve sailors, by “more than fifty, about a third of us being women”. D. Roques, that deducts the seamen from the total passengers, sets the maximum number of Arab horsemen in around twenty (1987, 246). However, in the text the crew is clearly differentiated from the passengers, so those should not be subtracted from the total, but they are a separate issue. Thus we would have about 30 soldiers together with Synesios and the rest of the crew.

It does not seem that these Arabs were to face the *Ausuriani*, since in 401, according to the letter, they were sent to Alexandria. The *Notitia Dignitatum* effectively includes the presence of an *Ala tertia Arabum* between the *limitanei* located in Egypt (*ND, Or.*, XXVIII, 24). An *ala*, however, consisted of about 500 horsemen, so those who traveled with Synesios constituted only a part of the unit, and probably the rest would travel scattered in other ships or by land, or maybe we have here an example of how the units of Late Antique army could not sum up to the number of soldiers that theoretically had to compose it.

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<sup>21</sup> We have very old testimonies of the incorporation of Arabs into the forces of the Roman Empire. For example, in the revolt of Judea during the reign of Augustus, we know that the Nabataean Arabs participated as auxiliary troops (*Jos., Bell. Iud.*, II, 66-79; 96-97); again, a few decades later, they provided military aid to Titus in the war against the Jews, a contingent of 6,000 troops among which the *equites sagitarii* were highlighted (*Jos., Bell. Iud.*, III, 4, 68). During the Late Empire, Themistios (34, 20) informs of the resistance in 384 of Arabian troops of *foederatii* against the attacks of the goths. We cannot exclude that in this case the soldiers constituted also federated troops, but we have no proof of this, and the fact is that their presence in Egypt on nearby dates is proven.

Unlike this Arabs, who surely had to face the Ausurians, were the *Marcomanni*. Judging by how the bishop refers to them, they did as efficiently as Unnigardae:

“You remember Chilas, I suppose; I mean the one who kept a disorderly house. Probably few do not know him. He was quite celebrated in his walk of life. Andromache, the actress who was one of the prettiest women of our time, was part of his company. After having passed his youth in this honorable career, he took it into his head that it would be a fitting sequel to his past life to shine in his old age by military achievements. So he has just come to us, after obtaining from the Emperor the command of our brave Marcomans. Now that they are so happy as to have a really fitting leader, it seems to us that these soldiers, who have always been brave enough, cannot fail to distinguish themselves by the most brilliant feats of arms.” (Syn., *Ep.*, 110, 1-10).

In this letter a sarcastic Synesios reported to his brother of the arrival of a personage, Chilas, who had just obtained the command of a troop — also referred to by the *Catastasis* II (287, 16)— whose fame must have been as bad as their commander’s. It was a unit of *equites Marcomanni*, a corps of cavalry coming from the Germanic tribe of the Marcomanni, whose origins can be dated to the third century<sup>22</sup>. It is striking that someone like Chilas, who was not a professional soldier, obtains the command of these troops. However, some testimonies suggest that this is not a one-off. In 407 Honorius directed an edict to Stilicho that distinguished between those who had reached the tribunate or praepositura by influence or interest, and those who had received this dignity after having developed a military career (*C. Th.* VII, 20, 13)<sup>23</sup>. Vegetius also

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<sup>22</sup> The Marcomanni were, according to Speidel 2006, 73-74, recruited by Gallienus among the Germanic tribes settled beyond the Empire during the early years of his reign. The incorporation of these troops would be in the context of the *foedus* signed in 258 with their king Attalus, by which his people were allowed to settle in Pannonia. The creation of this unit was located, according to Speidel, in the context of the emergence of other elite auxiliary cavalry units promoted by Gallienus (as were the *Equites Dalmatae, Promotii, Mauri, Sagitarii*), and not, as noted by Th. Mommsen, into the Constantinian *cunei*. The *Notitia Dignitatum* registers the Marcomans as a part of the army of *Pannonia Prima* (*Occ.* XXIV, 24), also among the *vexillationes comitatenses* of Africa (*Occ.* VI, 65). Finally, their presence in Egypt is found by the *Pap. BGU* 11, 2074, II, 5, dated in 286-287 B.C.

<sup>23</sup> “*Imp. Honorius et Theodosius aa. Stilichoni comiti et magistro utriusque militiae. Oportet inter eos, qui ambitu ac suffragiis ad tribunatus praepositurasque*

differentiated between “*tribunus maior per epistulam sacram imperatoris iudicio designatur, minor tribunus pervenit ex labore*” (*Epit.*, II, 7). According to A.H.M. Jones, “when the *domestici* and *protectores* ceased to be the source from which officers were drawn, commissioned rank was not thereby cut off from the rank and file” (1973, 642). It seems, therefore, that in times of Synesios the absence of a military career was not an impediment for becoming an official, if he had the favour – probably achieved by economic means – of the emperor. However, we talk of regional commands, as *praepositi* or *duces*, in the regions of origin of these figures. So Chilas, who apparently was an old acquaintance of Synesios, achieved in principle the *praepositus* rank over the Marcomans *limitanei* established in Cyrenaica, which, moreover, do not seem to be considered elite troops.

To these cavalry units settled in Cyrenaica we can add a group of Thracians. The only evidence of their presence in Cyrenaica would be the following mention by Synesios:

“The Ausurians have put on the breastplates of the Thracian cavalry, not of necessity, but to mock at the uniform. Besides these they employed the shields of the Marcomanni. The heavy-armed Roman force has degenerated into light infantry. They find their safety in the compassion of their enemies. I weep for these men, I do not reproach them with the calamity.” (*Catast.* II, 287, 14).

The speech dates from June 411. It seems that in an earlier confrontation that is related, the Ausurians had defeated a unit of Thracian soldiers, and taken their armours. Thracian units always appear in the *Notitia* as cohorts of *limitanei* (*Or.* XXVII, 31 y 32; XXXVIII, 45; *Occ.* XL, 50; XXXII, 59) and they only appear as *comitatenses* when it comes to *auxilia pallatina*, under the command of the *magister militum praesentalis per Orientem* (*ND, Or.*, VI, 60)<sup>24</sup>. As *limitanei*, they were not cantoned in the cities but

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*perveniunt, et eos, qui labore periculis atque ordine militiae decurso huiusmodi dignitates acceperint, esse discretionem. Quare innumeros eos haberi decernimus, qui militiae praerogativa, ut dignum est, ad tribunatum praeposituramve perveniunt. Conmonendi autem sunt comites et duces militum, ut et ipsi eos relevatos esse cognoscant neque aliquid hoc nomine ab his flagitandum. De quibus ad omnes militares iudices paria scripta direximus.”* (*C. Th.* VII, 20, 13).

<sup>24</sup> During the Empire the Thracians became famous within the Roman cavalry (*Procop.*, *BG*, III, 10, 1; III, 39, 4; IV, 26, 9), and we have in Africa numerous examples of these units. In 107 an *ala II Augusta Thracum* is attested as stationed in *Mauretania Caesarensis* (*CIL* III, 5654), and an *ala Thracum Mauretana* was



in fortresses in border areas, which explains that Synesios can provide limited details about them.

This unit of *limitanei* was composed therefore by foreign soldiers, *ξένοι*. However, when Synesios alludes to those troops that in official sources appear as *limitanei*, he usually refers, as seen in epistle 78, to the *ἀριθμοῖς ἐγγχωρίοις*, that is to say indigenous or local units. These constitute the *καστηρσίανοί* from the Edict of Anastasios (*SEG*, IX, 356, 11; 14), cantoned in the *castra* scattered all over the *limes*. They concentrated most military forces, although it seems, judging by the *Notitia* and the archaeological evidences, that the size of the units was relatively small (Jones, 1973, 683). The *limitanei* come from an eminently local recruitment, and they were subjected to the orders of equestrian officers, *duces* of each region or *praepositi limitis*, whose command did not always match territorially with the boundaries of the provinces. The letters by Synesios placed them under the commands of the *dux Libyarum Cerialis* between 404 and 405 (*Ep.*, 130; 132; 133; *Catast.*, II, 300 a); he was preceded by Artabazaces (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 135), and will be succeeded by Diogenes between 405 and 406 (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 119; 131; 134), Uranius, between 407 and 410 (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 40), Anysius, in the years 410-411 (*Syn.*, *Ep.*, 6; 14; 34; 59; 77; 78; 94; *Catast.*, I y II), Innocentius, between 411 and 412 (*Catast.*, II) and, finally, Marcellinus between 412 and 413 (*Ep.*, 62; 41), who was the last *dux* Synesios referenced.

With regard to the local recruitment of these soldiers, it is important to notice a disposal contained in the *Codex Theodosianus* VII, 15, 1<sup>25</sup>, directed by Emperor Honorius to the vicar of Africa in 409, where it is noted that there were certain areas of land reserved for the *gentiles* in

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later moved to Judaea (*CIL* XVI, 33), and subsequently cantoned in Egypt from 142 or earlier until at least the reign of Severus (*AE* 1948, 56, 142). Again in Mauretania, in 150 an *Ala Thracum veteranorum Sagittariorum* is recorded (*CIL*, XVI, 99), which was sent from Pannonia. With regard to the *cohortes*, in Africa we only attest a *Cohors Gemella Thracum eq.* in Numidia, though the inscriptions (*CIL* VIII, 2251; 5885) cannot be precisely dated (Jarrett 1969, 215-224).

<sup>25</sup>“*Impp. Honorius et Theodosius aa. Gaudentio vicario Africae. Terrarum spatia, quae gentilibus propter curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati antiquorum humana fuerant provisione concessa, quoniam comperimus aliquos retinere, si eorum cupiditate vel desiderio retinentur, circa curam fossati tuitionemque limitis studio vel labore noverint serviendum ut illi, quos huic operi antiquitas deputarat. Alioquin sciant haec spatia vel ad gentiles, si potuerint inveniri, vel certe ad veteranos esse non inmerito transferenda, ut hac provisione servata fossati limitisque nulla in parte timoris esse possit suspicio.*” (*C. Th.* VII, 15, 1).

consideration of the care and maintenance of the frontier and its fortifications (“*propter curam munitionemque limitis atque fossati*”). The law orders that they shall not be granted to outsiders who do not fulfil these obligations, but should be reserved for barbarians or, if these fail, for veterans. Archaeological surveys have revealed a more or less continuous wall (*fossatum*) running along the desert boundary (Goodchild, 1952, 149), and large areas of irrigated land along it on both sides: these could be, according to A.H.M. Jones, the lands mentioned in the law, and the numerous fortified farmhouses or *gsur* that we found in the frontier zone would be occupied, in his view, by groups of *limitanei* (1973, 652). Furthermore the application of the term *gentiles* to the *limitanei*, which were local troops, is significant in the decree. In this context the *gentiles* are native barbarians, different from *ξένοι*, foreigners. Those were, therefore, troops recruited from the indigenous population, considered barbarians in their own place of origin<sup>26</sup>.

Another unit that we can classify between the *limitanei* of Cyrenaica are the *Balagritae*. They appear firstly in letter 104, dated by D. Roques on May 405<sup>27</sup>, that is at the beginning of the hostilities against the Ausurians. The next mention of these soldiers, one month later at the utmost, is much more interesting:

“At night, with an escort of young men, I patrol the hill and I give the women an opportunity of sleeping without fear, for they know that there are those who are watching over them.

Moreover I have with me some of the corps of the Balagritae. Before Cerialis had taken over the command of the province, these men were mounted bowmen (*ἰπποτοξόται*); but when he entered upon his functions, their horses were sold and they became only archers, but even as infantry they are useful to me. We need archery in defence of our wells and of the river, as water is entirely lacking in the interior of our lines. (...) We must, therefore, of necessity be brave men. Do you, on your side, take heart and rally the others.

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<sup>26</sup> Note the similar use of the term *gentiles* by the Hispanic author Orosius: “*Praeceperas mihi, uti aduersus uaniloquam prauitatem eorum, qui alieni a ciuitate Dei ex locorum agrestium conpitis et pagis pagani uocantur siue gentiles quia terrena sapiunt, qui cum futura non quaerant, praeterita autem aut obliuiscantur aut nesciant, praesenti a tamen tempora ueluti malis extra solitum infestatissima ob hoc solum quod creditur Christus et colitur Deus, idola autem minus coluntur, infamant*” (I, 9).

<sup>27</sup> In the French, Spanish and English editions this letter is dated, however, prior to 396 (*vid. n. 7 and 11*).

As to that pair of voracious horses which you are feeding only the tax-collector, give orders to have them brought to you. Particularly in moments like these a horse is no useless possession. For whether it is scouting, observing the enemy, or carrying messages in the shortest time - all this a horse can do so easily.

If you are in want of archers, send for them and they will come. (...) I seek only a small number of men, but they must not be false to their manhood. If I can find such, by God's grace be it said, I shall have courage." (Syn., *Ep.*, 132, 20-44).

Before the imminent attack of the Ausurians, the inhabitants of the city from which Synesios writes, possibly Ptolemais, took refuge within the walls. The only defences available in the city are those organised by the bishop, who has taken under his command the unit of Balagritae. Its members were, says Synesios, *equites saggitarii* (*ἵπποτοξόται*). Since they initially were under the orders of the *dux* Cerialis, we consider them as *limitanei*.

Unlike other cavalry units we have seen, the Balagritae, as its name indicates, were of local provenance, from the city of Balagre (El-Beida), southeast of Cyrene. Synesios tells (*Ep.* 104, 12) that they were under the command of a philarch ("*Βαλαγρίτας συντεταγμένους ἐξῆγεν ὀφύλαρχος*"). This term was applied in the V<sup>th</sup> and VI<sup>th</sup> to the officers of the Eastern Empire in charge of troops of *foederati* (Jones, 1973, 611 and 1252, n. 8), indicating, again, the existence of a barbarian component in the provenance of these troops, which would then be native. This would, therefore, be one of the units listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as *equites saggitarii indigenae*, theoretically formed by 500 riders (Roques, 1987, 251), and which are particularly numerous in the Thebaid (*ND, Or.*, XXXI, 25-29).

Synesios's testimony gives us, first, an excellent example of how the corruption in regional military commanders adversely affects the defence of the provinces. Moreover, the letter reflects the consequences of this situation: the formation of private militias under the command of provincial aristocrats, such as the Bishop of Cyrene. Thus the Balagritae would abandon their status of *limitanei* and were to be part of the category on which we now turn, the militias or private armies. In addition, it is interesting that Synesios urges his brother to seize the horses of the commander; if the provincial inhabitants are taking the responsibility of the defence, there is no reason to continue maintaining his position. It is producing a true dislocation of imperial power in the provinces.

In summary, Cyrenaica before the attack of the Ausurians was inadequately protected. The units that Synesios mentions are in total a

scarce contingent and, except for the Unnigardae, the detachments are not presented as very effective. While A.H.M. Jones said the troops under the command of the *dux Libyarum* must have been the most numerous of the Empire (1968, 292), this seems unlikely. Instead, the estimation by D. Roques (1987, 252) on the number of troops from the units described above is more suitable, although it is not entirely accurate to the time to which we refer. His account was based on the consideration that both Arabs as Marcomanni and Thracians were *alae* of *limitanei*, of 500 riders each, the Unnigardae would constitute part of a *vexillatio palatina* (from the *comitatense* army), which had 40 riders, the *Equites Dalmatae* were, in his opinion, another *vexillatio* of *comitatenses* with around 500 men, like the Balagritae, constituted as *equites sagittarii indigenae (limitaei)*. The number rose, following Roques, to 2,540 soldiers.

However, if we want to know how many troops were in Cyrenaica for the defence against the Ausurians just at the precise moment of their arrival, in 405, we must refine these estimations. The Arabs, as Synesios notes his move to Alexandria in 401, should be eliminated from the recount. The number of the Unnigardae was, in effect, 40, and accepting that Dalmatians, Thracians, Marcomans and Balagritae units were composed by 500 members each, we would obtain a maximum total of 2,044 troops, as long as these units respect the official size, which is in this period rather unlikely. We speak therefore of a very small number of effective defence<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> With respect to the number of troops of the Ausurians, note the informations provided by Synesios about the fact that they had “five thousand dromedaries with their booty” and that, after winning a battle, they left “with three times their number by the addition of captives, and their host was so much the greater.” (*Catast.*, II, 302 c). If the prisoners were twice the attackers, the latter constitute about 2,500 warriors. However, in the same text Synesios says that four *centuriae* of Unnigardae would be enough to eliminate the Ausurians (301 a). In addition in his work *Constitutio* Synesios says that 200 Unnigardae were enough to tackle with 1,000 barbarians (306 a). Therefore we have a ratio of 4 or 5 Ausurians eliminated by each soldier of the Unnigardae. According to these calculations, D. Roques estimated that the Ausurians would be a contingent of 2,000 soldiers (1987, 290), a similar number to the total that formed the regular army of Cyrenaica according to Synesios, although these troops were scattered throughout the territory, in relatively small units, which in any case could face successfully to the fast attacks from such a number of enemies.

Because of this situation, the Ausurians could penetrate quickly into Cyrenaica<sup>29</sup>, reaching the Wadi Kuf, an area of great strategic importance as nexus between Lower Libya and Libya Pentapolis, a fact that caused lack of communication between both regions (Goodchild, 1953). We can see then a clear tactic of these barbarian troops, aided by the greater mobility and speed a light armament grants (Laronde, 1987, 207)<sup>30</sup>. The fast and violent arrival of a few troops (Syn., *Ep.*, 104; *Catast.*, II, 2, 300 a) caused that the scarce Roman troops from the cities focused on defending the fortified enclosures (Syn., *Ep.*, 130; 133; *Catast.*, II, 2, 300 a), waiting for help. Meanwhile the barbarians may have engaged in pillaging of fields, seizing the crops and the cattle (Syn., *Ep.*, 130; 132; 133; *Catast.*, II, 2, 302b). The siege operations started by the Ausurians would have had thus the goal, not of taking the cities, but rather of causing the vulnerability of populations outside the walls.

It is in this context of military crisis when Synesios decides to take charge of the resistance of Cyrenaica and organises a defence under his leadership. We can affirm, as we argue below, the existence of a true “private army” led by the Bishop of Cyrene.

#### 4. The private army of Synesios

According to the terminology proposed by R. Sanz Serrano (1986, 225), the name of this sort of troops as “private armies” is due, first, to the need for their differentiation with respect to the Roman regular army. This fundamentally entails a parallel existence and a different structure and composition. They are armies to the extent that they gather a relative number of troops, organised and disposed to carry out acts of war under the authority of a higher command. Furthermore, in terms of their composition and behaviour, they should be regarded as private, since they have an extra-official nature and do not constitute any of the armies supported by the emperors. Their *raison d'être* is not the service to the

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<sup>29</sup> Synesios attributed the advent of the Ausurians to their realisation of the vulnerable situation of Cyrenaica: “This was soon known to the Macetae; there half-barbarous people told the story to the barbarians themselves and these later. ‘Came countless like the leaves and flowers in spring’.” (Syn., *Ep.*, 130, 15). For a more detailed study of these peoples *vid.* de Francisco Heredero 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Throughout history light troops had demonstrated a greater efficacy than large contingents heavily armed in steppe or desert areas; we have some examples of this in the warfare episodes occurred in Libya during World War II (Colin 2000, 210).

state, but the service of a significant person who is in charge of their maintenance. Therefore, the Emperor has no control over them beyond the control exercised over their leaders. These are part of a privileged minority that in a context of decomposition of public authority, as patrons of large segments of the society, were entrusted with the functions of political leadership in the provinces, and eventually acted as intermediaries between the Emperor and the members of the community (Lécrivain, 1890, 252-253; Harmand, 1967, 425-427; Sanz Serrano, 1986, 226). Synesios constitutes one of those persons. But before examining the characteristics of his private troops, we must pay attention to the causes that brought him to their organisation.

The first one resided in the defence needs of Cyrenaica against the attacks of the Ausurians, towards which the imperial troops proved to be insufficient. Certainly these barbarians were not a contingent too numerous compared to those who pressed about the borders of other provinces<sup>31</sup> but, as we have seen, Cyrenaica did not have a big number of troops to face them. The failure to protect the Libyan-Roman peoples is rooted in the crisis of the Empire, and comes through two channels. First an indirect way, which lay in the corruption of the regional military charges. In particular Synesios informs about the corrupt behaviour of Cerialis, *dux Libyae* of the years 404-405, precisely the time when we have news of the first attacks of the Ausurians. Not only, as we saw, he misappropriated the resources of the Balagritae unit (*Ep.*, 132, 25-26); he even went so far as to license the soldiers and use them to collect illegal taxes:

“As if the possessions of soldiers belong rightfully to the general, he (Cerialis) takes away whatever they have, and gives them in return exemption from service, and allows them to go freely, wherever they hope to find anything to live on. After having behaved to the inhabitants of the counter in this manner (for as to the foreigners, it was impossible to levy money upon them), he proceeded to extract money from their cities by conducting troops there and moving them, not where there was the greatest military advantage, but where there was most plunder. Burdened by this billeting of troops upon them, the cities paid in gold.” (*Ep.*, 130, 9-15).

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<sup>31</sup> At the moment when about 2,000 Ausurian warriors crossed the boundaries of Cyrenaica, a coalition of 70,000 Sueves, Vandals and Alans, among whom at least 10,000 soldiers would be included, passed the Rhine (Heather 2010, 180).

Therefore, the direct result of the corrupt actions of the *dux* Cerialis was the vulnerability of Cyrenaica before the imminent arrival of the barbarians fled from Northwest Africa. The above letter mentions, in addition, another problem derived from corruption: the existence of an increasing number of soldiers who, having been licensed or simply receiving no support, probably opted for looting and stealing for a living. Thus, we have to consider Cerialis' actions not only as a factor of defencelessness, but a cause for the increase of dangerousness in Cyrenaica. Going over the roads that linked remote populations became undoubtedly risky, a fact that must have made it difficult for the terrestrial communications and caused the isolation of the inland regions (*Ep.*, 148).

However, corruption of regional military officers was not the only cause for lack of protection of Cyrenaica; the absence of aid sent from the Empire was added. Certainly, we find in the letters and speeches of Synesios several requests for reinforcements (*Ep.*, 69; 78, 28-36; *Catast.* I, 306 a; *Catast.* II, 301 a), but in no case does he mention that these were finally submitted<sup>32</sup>. Only the Marcomans seem to have arrived in Cyrenaica at a date after the first attacks, but as we have seen they do not seem a very numerous unit.

Hence, the Cyrenian populations remain at the mercy of sudden attacks. Then came the necessity of organising their own defences of a private nature:

“(…) None of us shows any indignation. We remain helpless in our homes. We always wait for our soldiers to defend us, and a sorry help they are! And, in spite of this, we are never done talking about the pay we give them and the privileges which they enjoy in time of peace, as if this were the moment to impeach them, and not the moment to hurl back the barbarians.

When shall we have done with our useless chatter? When shall we act seriously? Let us collect our peasants, the tillers of the soil, to advance upon the enemy, to assure the safety of our wives, of our children, of our country (*πατρις*), and also, I may add, of our soldiers. It will be a fine thing in time of peace to go about saying that we took care of the troops, and that we saved them.

I am dictating this letter almost from my horse. I myself enrolled companies and officers with the resources I had at my disposal. I am collecting a very considerable body of *Asusamas* also, and I have given the

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<sup>32</sup> After the death of the bishop of Cyrene, Priskos of Panion (*frg.* 14) informs about the shipment of troops from Constantinople under the command of general Amartius to fight against the Ausurians. Although he succeeded in his campaign, suddenly he fell ill and died.

Dioestae word to meet me at Cleopatra<sup>33</sup>. Once we are on the march, and when it is announced that a young army has collected round me, I hope that many more will join us of their own free will. They will come from every side, the best men to associate themselves with our glorious undertaking, and the worthless to get booty.” (Syn., *Ep.*, 125, 8-26).

We have other letters where Synesios speaks about the organisation of his private army (108; 133), but none offers as much information as this one does. Firstly, he mentions one of the reasons why we must consider his troops as an army and not as a simple armed band: they were organised into sections or companies (*λόχοι*), with commanders in charge (*λοχαγοί*). Secondly, it tells about the composition of his troops, “peasants, the tillers of the soil”. We note that the integration of peasants into the ranks of private armies is an inherent characteristic of their creation. In Hispania, Orosius informs about the troops commanded by the brothers Didymus and Verinian against the invading army of Constans, composed by “*seruulos tantum suos ex propriis praediis colligentes ac uernaculis alentes sumptibus*” (VII, 40, 5). Thus, domestic servants (*uernaculi*) were added to peasants (*seruli*). Priscillian also had private troops for his defence (*Chron.*, II, 46, 6), an army that included women, in addition to colonists of the bishops loyal to him. In Pamphylia, given the lack of protection breach by the provincial military commands (Claud., *Eutr.*, II, 580-2584), a citizen named Valentinus of Shelge recruited an army of slaves and peasants to fend off the attacks of the Goths of Tribigild (Zos., V, 15, 5). We do not know whether there were also slaves in Synesios’s forces, although in the letter above he laments the integration in its ranks of “the worthless”. With them, the population of the cities should also join these troops, as the *Dioestae* mentioned by Synesios.

Another element to consider in the composition of private troops is the soldiers who, having been licensed, or lacking the support that the Empire used to provide, decided to incorporate themselves to these unofficial armies. We saw how the Balagritae leave the regular army to join Synesios’ forces (*Ep.*, 130, 10; 132), adding a professional component to this private army. There does not seem to have existed any particular regulation in the Late Empire to punish the inclusion of defectors into private troops of the *domini* (*C. Th.* VII, 1, 17)<sup>34</sup>, and we know the case of

<sup>33</sup> A population (the Dioestae) and a city (Cleopatra) of Libya.

<sup>34</sup> “*Idem aa. Romuliano praefecto Urbi. Si qui miles ex his, qui praesentes divino obsequio nostrae clementiae deputati sunt et qui in hac esse urbe praesente comitatu concessi sunt quive de aliis numeris vel legionibus sunt, repertus fuerit*



a certain Salvian of Marseille, who took defectors onto their properties (*De gub.*, V, 7).

Therefore, the composition of private armies could be in general quite heterogeneous. Regarding the incorporation of peasants “of their own free” (*Ep.*, 125, 24), it is important to note that there is a significant relationship between the formation of private armies and the phenomenon of patronage (Sanz Serrano, 1986, 239). Synesios was a member of the landed aristocracy of Cyrenaica. It is quite possible that a substantial part of the peasants of his troops had some kind of dependency relationship with him or with his lands. As it is known, patronage relationships can vary widely between the different regions. With respect to Egypt, we know in the last third of the fourth century two provisions of the *Codex Theodosianus* (XI, 24, 1; XI, 3, 3)<sup>35</sup> that inform about the existence of free peasants who, in order to avoid taxes, took refuge under the protection of *duces* or officers of the *comes Aegypti*, being those landowners to whom regularly these peasant must pay a rent (Jones, 1973, 776-777). This information agrees with the testimony of Libanios of Antioch, who claimed in his *Oratio* 47 “On patronage” that the military officers set themselves up in protectors of the population in exchange for money or nourishment, fact that caused this population to fail to pay its rents to the *curiales*.

In 415 another provision reports that the Church of Alexandria, by special concession from the Augustian prefect, could maintain *metrocomiae* or *publici vici* under his protection, as long as the villagers paid all their taxes (*C. Th.* XI, 24, 6). The North African churches, as a result of donations, had become important possessors of land (Jones, 1973, p.781). Applying this situation to the Cyrenaica, we could conclude that Synesios, due to his status as landowner aristocrat or because of his position as Metropolitan of Ptolemais, was in a position of having a large number of servants who integrated into his army. The relationship with them can theoretically be defined as “free” since they were not *adscripticii*.

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*vel sibi vacans vel alieno obsequio contentus, nobis ilico nuntietur, ita ut conscii, qui talium praesentiam non praebuerint, viginti libras auri sciant esse se multandos* (*C. Th.* VII, 1, 17).

<sup>35</sup> “*Colonorum multitudinem indicasti per Aegyptum constitutorum ad eorum sese, qui variis honoribus fulciuntur, ducum etiam patrocinia contulisse*” (*C. Th.* XI, 24, 1). “*Quicumque ex officio tuo vel ex quocumque hominum ordine vicos in suum detecti fuerint patrocinium suscepisse, constitutas luent poenas*” (*C. Th.* XI, 3, 3).

Regarding this, it is important that Synesios grouped his forces in his property of Asusamas. From the fourth century onwards, the Cyrenian landscape is characterised by the abundance of fortified farms, of which Synesios' could be an example, although until now it has not been identified with any archaeological site. Moreover, these sites were farming centres able to generate a surplus (Wilson, 2004, 149) that would be employed to the maintenance of troops. Therefore, the properties of these landed aristocrats of Cyrenaica were an ideal place for the meeting of a relative number of soldiers:

“I have gained three hundred lances and as many scimitars. As to two-edged swords, I never had more than ten, for they do not manufacture these long iron weapons in our country. I think, however, the scimitars strike the bodies of our enemies a more terrible blow, and for that reason we shall use them.

At a pinch we can have clubs, for our wild-olive trees are excellent. Some of our men carry also hatchets, ground on one side, in their belts. By battering the shields of our enemies with hatchets, we force them to fight on an equal footing with us, as we have no defensive armour. A band of the enemy met some of our scouts recently.

Tomorrow, I think, the battle will take place. A band of the enemy met some of our scouts recently. (...) I hope, therefore, that tomorrow by the aid of God I may vanquish the enemy, or, that, not to say anything of ill omen, I shall vanquish him in a second attempt.” (Syn, *Ep.*, 108, 1-19).

As attested by this letter, the maintenance of a private army not only involved the support of troops but also provided them with weapons. Probably in this *villa*, where most likely there would be at least a furnace, were forged the lance tips and the knives referred to, but not the *spathas*; to manufacture weapons like these, as well as the cuirasses and the helmets, specialised artisans were needed. They also lacked iron maces and double-edged axes, like those used by the regular soldiers due to the influence of the Germanic troops in the army; nevertheless they had wooden maces and axes of one edge, designed for farming and not for the military actions. Therefore, due to the pressing situation, Synesios's troops were armed poorly, with weapons more typical of a farmer than a soldier. But Synesios had the right contacts to obtain a more appropriate weaponry, particularly Olympios, a convenient friend in the court of Constantinople (Lacombrade, 1951, 51-52):

“I shall leave you, however, entirely at liberty to send me gifts, for of course Synesios must yield to Olympios, but they must not be gifts of a

luxurious sort. I disapprove of the luxury of the quarters assigned to the company.

Send me, then, things that are useful for soldiers, such as bows and arrows, and above all arrows with heads attached to them. As far as the bows are concerned, I can at a pinch buy them elsewhere, or repair those which I have already, but it is not easy to procure arrows, I mean really good ones. The Egyptian arrows that we have bulge at the knots and sink in between the knots, so that they deviate from their right course. They are like men starting in a foot-race, who from the very start are hampered and stumble; but those which are manufactured in your country are long and deftly turned on the pattern of a single cylinder; and this means everything for the straight course of their flight.” (*Ep.*, 133, 34-45).

The arrows that Synesios asks for from his friend Olympios could be identified with the *plumbatae*, a sort of arrows approximately one meter in length with a long metal tip, weighed down at their lower end with a lead bulge which acts as counterweight and increases their capacity to penetrate. Synesios’ difficulty to arm his warriors was caused by the legislation issued from the early fifth century, aimed at achieving that no individual could manufacture or sell weapons. The specialised manufacturers (*deputati*) were enrolled in the imperial arms factories (*fabricate*), instead of working in private business, or were assigned to army units for repairing the troops weapons (Jones, 1973, 671). Therefore, the only way to obtain arms supplies was that they were provided by the State, which could be very detrimental when facing situations as we have seen at Cyrenaica:

“Really you are joking when you say that you want to prevent us from manufacturing arms while the enemy is holding the country, plundering everything, and slaughtering whole populations every day, and when we have no soldiers to be seen. Are you going to maintain then that private individuals are not authorised to bear arms, but allowed to die? Evidently the government is full of wrath against those who attempt to save themselves.

Very well, then, if I gain nothing else, at all events the laws shall be our masters instead of these destroyers. How high a value, think you, do I set on seeing peace flowering again, the tribunal in position, and the herald ordering silence! Yes, I desire only to die when my city has regained her former position.” (*Syn., Ep.*, 107).

In this letter Synesios most likely refers to the regulation of the *C. Th.* XV, 15 dated in October 364, which forbids individuals to carry

weapons<sup>36</sup>. It seems, however, that the state did not always maintain this attitude regarding the use of weapons by citizens. At times it even went on to hand over the defence of public order to armed citizens (MacMullen, 1994, 130-133). Additionally, a change in attitude in this sense could be due to a change of political context. It is quite possible that in a time of political instability as the Empire experimented at this time, the above-mentioned legislation was issued in order to avoid the creation of private armies and its use by usurpers.

The exercise of self-defence in a context of isolation and the lack of protection from the imperial government caused, as evidenced by Synesios, the strengthening of a sense of localism. The fight against the barbarian was not any longer at the service of the Emperor, but in defence of one's own "homeland" or "country" (*Ep.*, 94; 95; 107).

## 5. Summary

The work of Synesios constitutes an exceptional corpus to study fifth century Cyrenaica. Traditionally, he has been studied for his religious significance and as a Neoplatonic philosopher (Clausen, 1931; Lacombrade, 1951; Blázquez Martínez, 2004; Bregman, 1982, among others), and only D. Roques (1987) attended to some military aspects that are fundamental to understand the problems of Cyrenaica at this time.

From the West, from Tripolitania, came a wave of Ausurians that, having participated in the wrong side in the war of Gildo, were fleeing from the Roman repression in northeastern Africa. We attest that, as in other provinces, the phenomenon of invasions was often associated with the use of barbarian troops in usurpations and uprisings.

When the Ausurians reached the borders of Cyrenaica, the *limitanei* settled in the *castra* did not conform a sufficient number to stop them. The *limes* was overwhelmed and, once the Ausurians reached the Wadi Kuf, both *Libyae* were cut off and the Pentapolis was exposed to the arrival of the Barbarians (Goodchild, 1953). The *comitatenses* troops that were distributed within the Cyrenaica territory were also insufficient to meet them, a fact that caused that available troops remained keeping the defence of walled cities, waiting for an imperial aid that never arrived. Meanwhile, the barbarians ravaged the Cyrenaica fields.

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<sup>36</sup> "*Quod armorum usus interdictus est. Impp. Valentinianus et Valens aa. ad Buleforum consularem Campaniae. Nulli prorsus nobis insciis adque inconsultis quorumlibet armorum movendorum copia tribuatur.*" (*C. Th.* XV, 15).

In this situation Synesios decides to play the role of prominent man of the province and organises an army under his command, composed mainly of peasants from his land, as well as other people among whom were professional soldiers discharged or fled from the units of *limitanei* and *comitatenses*, devoid of a support that the administration used to give them. This sometimes occurred because of corruption, that Synesios shows through the figure of the *dux* Cerialis, that we must consider as a factor in the persistent vulnerability of the Cyrenaica. Synesios exercises with his private troops the defence of his country (and his properties); his army fights not in the service of the Emperor, but of his homeland.

We can put these facts in connection with Synesios's speech against the barbarian element in general, and particularly Gothic, integrated in the Roman world. In his essay *De regno* the bishop of Cyrene delivers a devastating critique against the integration of the Scythians in the army and in the Senate of Constantinople: "these men will fall upon us the first moment they think the attempt likely to succeed" (22 b). Certainly these barbarians, who had previously served under the orders of the Roman magistrates in Tripolitania, had supported Gildo and now ravaged Cyrenaica. In the Pentapolis the foreign soldiers of the *comitatenses* units, with all the "privileges which they enjoy in time of peace" (Syn., *Ep.*, 125, 10), remained safeguarded in the cities without facing the barbarians who ravaged the territory around them.

In the aforementioned epistle 25, Synesios urged his brother Evoptio to join, as he had done, the peasants of their lands to protect his possessions. With the nonchalance of the Emperor, Cyrenaica could only be defended by its own children, by characters who, like Synesios, had the ability to take command of an army and go into battle, and that became directors of the community's political affairs, becoming intermediaries, as reflected in some letters by Synesios (and his own embassy to Constantinople is an example) between members of local communities and the Court. In such situations, the Church made an effort to integrate provincial aristocracy with his servants, as a means to receive the baton of political power in the provinces, where the imperial administration was already scarce. In this context Synesios was ordained bishop, a few years before his death in 412 or 413.

Synesios' story is, therefore, one of the great changes that shook the Eastern and Western empires in the last centuries of the Antiquity. His work not only informs of the events with surprising realism, but also tells us about a man who was the protagonist of the facts he describes, sharing the fate of fifth century Cyrenaica.

# ONE ELEPHANT AND TWO GIRAFFES ON THE INCENSE ROUTE

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Timotheos of Gaza, a contemporary of Emperor Anastasios, in his work *Libris de Animalibus*, mentions that in his hometown, Gaza, he has seen one elephant and two giraffes, brought there by a man from Ayla as a gift for Emperor Anastasios.<sup>1</sup> This can be linked with an assertion by Marcellinus Comes who, in an annotation for the year 496 in his *Chronicon*, writes that “*India Anastasio principi elephantum, quem Plautus poeta noster lucabum nomine dicit, duasque camelopardalas pro munere misit*”<sup>2</sup>. From this quote by the Justinian’s chronicler, it follows that from Gaza the animals succeeded in arriving to Constantinople.

This type of gifts, although they may be considered something remarkable and unique, were repeated later with Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, who received a present sent from Egypt (a gift made by the corresponding contemporary Muslim governor, it is assumed) which consisted of a giraffe and an elephant<sup>3</sup>. There is also evidence, thanks to the travelogue written by González de Clavijo, that a mission by the Sultan of Babylon to the Court of Timur was carrying “*seis abestruces e una animalia que es llamada jornusa*”<sup>4</sup>.

From the historical point of view, this knowledge has had little impact, even though the few specialists who have dealt with this issue have provided totally conflicting comments. On the one hand, Stanley M. Burstein (1992, 56, footnote 6) argues that the gift might have been a royal present from one governor to the other, and these giraffes guarantee an

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<sup>1</sup> Haupt 1869, 1-30, esp. 15, lines 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> Mommsen 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Attaleiates, in Pérez Martín 2002, 36-38 and footnote 35.

<sup>4</sup> “Jornusa” is the first Spanish rendering of “giraffe”, derived from the Arab *zarafa*. López Estrada 1999, 197.

African location for India. He further argues that he who sent the gift was the ruler of Aksum and that the gift represented a diplomatic overture on his part for Byzantine assistance against Himyar in Arabia.

On the other hand, Irfan Shahîd (1995, 28-31) questions both conclusions and claims that, despite the fact the animals might have come from an African habitat, the gift for Anastasios could have derived from the ruler of South Arabia. Furthermore, he claims that it was an exchange of gifts between Himyar and Byzantium, since there is another precedent of Himyarite-Byzantine exchange of gifts from the fourth century, when Constantius was given an ape called Pan. Besides, Irfan Shahîd talks about diplomatic contact between South Arabia and Anastasios, as the court of Byzantium sent to Himyar a bishop named Silvanos. Finally, the fact that the animals appeared in Ayla, *Palaestina Tertia*, instead of Clysma in Egypt, suggests that these animals, had they travelled by land, would have come from the south of Arabia, not Ethiopia.

Our intention is to analyse the possible route that the animals made in the fragment that is unquestionable, namely Ayla-Gaza, and whether there is any reason why Shahîd asserts that they made it through the deserts of Sinai and the Negeb<sup>5</sup>. However, before we focus on the animals and Ayla as to reproduce their route, we must make some considerations.

To begin with, it is commonly admitted that the Greco-Roman writers of the time named “Indians” to Abyssinians and Himyarites<sup>6</sup>. If we are to imagine a different origin for the animals, India for the elephant and Africa for the giraffes, it would be reasonable to make them coincide in the south of Arabia and, from that point, starting their journey towards Ayla. Yet, if we accept the same place of origin, it is fair to sustain that the animals came from Africa and arrived in Arabia by sea. This is due to the fact that although it may be difficult to imagine the Abyssinians sailing the seas, Kosmas<sup>7</sup> mentions seamen from Adulis on the Sinhalese bays and the Persian Gulf, which is confirmed by Prokopios<sup>8</sup>. The ivory which, according to Kosmas, was exported from Aksum to India, Persia, Himyar and the Roman Empire, might have travelled therefore through Abyssinian means<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, as opposed to the information provided by Bishop Silvanos, a bit later, in 525, a Byzantine-Ethiopian joint operation against

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<sup>5</sup> Shahîd, *op. cit.* 29.

<sup>6</sup> To justify this interpretation, Hourani 1951 (ed. 1995), 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Topographia Christiana*, Book XI, 336-39.

<sup>8</sup> *The Persian Wars*, Book 1, chapter 20, sections 9-13.

<sup>9</sup> Juvenal criticises the overconsumption of ivory arriving from Nabataean territory. *Satires*, XI, 120-125.

the Jewish ruler Masruq from South Arabia took place<sup>10</sup>. Let us not forget that in his moment of greatest glory, Aksum ruled over the north of Ethiopia, Eritrea, the north of Sudan, Djibuti, the west of Somalia, Yemen and the south of current Saudi Arabia. That is why Aksum's access both to the Red Sea and the Upper Nile would have allowed him to have a powerful naval fleet (Hamatta 1974, 95-100).

We are told, though, that "had they travelled by land, they would have come from the south of Arabia, not from Ethiopia". It might be argued that the animals could have perfectly set off from Ethiopia by boat and, after crossing the Red Sea near the Arabian shore, they might have been landed there. However, this raises serious questions:

Firstly, if they are African, why not travel by land to Alexandria and, once there, embark right away towards Byzantium? Or, if they are to embark, why don't they travel as far as Clysma, instead of Ayla, and from there to *Nova Roma*? There is considerable evidence suggesting that Trajan's Cannal between the Nile and the Red Sea and its port in Clysma were in full-fledged commercial activity in the IV and V centuries (Young 2001, 86). One reason for not embarking the animals might have been that the ships had not been ready to sustain the 4 tonnes or so that an elephant weighs, plus the two giraffes. Another reason was the impossibility to be able to guarantee the safety of the vessel, the passengers and all necessary for the voyage. Moreover, let us highlight the difficulty that big ships faced when sailing towards the north, due to strong winds.

This brings us back to the consideration that if the animals are indeed put aboard, the voyage must be as short as possible and will lead them to both shores of the Red River.

It appears that once in Arabia, having arrived no matter how, they travel by land to Ayla. It is a difficult task to make such a convoy move along the *Incense Route*. They carry a gift for the emperor and it must be sufficiently protected so, in principle, an escort would be needed so as to prevent loitering Bedouin tribes from attacking them. As well the escort, the "cornaca" (the person who looks after an elephant) and the rest of the personnel in charge of taking care of the animals, it is essential to have a sufficient number of camels and camel riders who transported the provisions of men and animals. And it should be taken into account that an elephant might eat as much as 200 kg of grass per day, and a giraffe nearly

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<sup>10</sup> Considering the inaccuracies of John Malalas, vid. *Chronographia*, Book XVI for the Emperor Anastasios, and Book XVIII, 433-434 for Justinian and Aksum. On the inaccuracies of this chronicler, Downey 1961, 38-40.



60 kg. The need of water is pressing for elephants, so this would have an impact on the duration of the stages which, according to Strabo<sup>11</sup>, were seventy from the south of Arabia up to Ayla. It is hard to imagine a convoy with an elephant and two giraffes crossing the desert for not less than seventy days.

Furthermore, we should mention the unfavourable situation of Arabia in those days on account of the fact the accession to the throne of Anastasios had coincided with particularly devastating Arab raids. In the years 491-492, Arab gangs arrived to and plundered Emesa. Years later, this chaos intensified, the audacity of the tribes increased and the attacks against the empire show the extent of the antagonism opposed against Arab chieftains. The Ghassanids (who had been expelled from the south by Kinda's attacks) try to settle between the tribe of Sali'h (situated in what is today Syria and Jordan), the centre and north of the Arabian Peninsula (where Kinda is trying to prevail) and the tribe of Amorkesos, the *philarca*, owner of the island of Iotabe, Ayla and the Red Sea coasts. The Ghassanids are finally located in Balqa' (northeast of what is now Jordan)<sup>12</sup>. The caravan's various stages take place in some of these territories, and ends upon arrival to Ayla's port, owned by Amorkesos.

Another aspect to analyse is Timotheos of Gaza's apparently incomplete statement that the animals have been taken there by a man of Ayla. As already discussed above, a major infrastructure is necessary to move the animals. This is better understood if we bear in mind that this man of Ayla aforementioned was the man in charge of the caravan and he was acting on a mandate from the *philarca* of Ayla. In that moment, the latter commanded the port, the mobility of goods and the city<sup>13</sup>, and he had taken care of the gift on arriving to his territory.

As stated, Shahîd (1995, p.29) adds that this man escorted the animals during their route throughout Sinai and the Negev. Yet, if there is a more direct, protected and comfortable route for such caravans, that is not the

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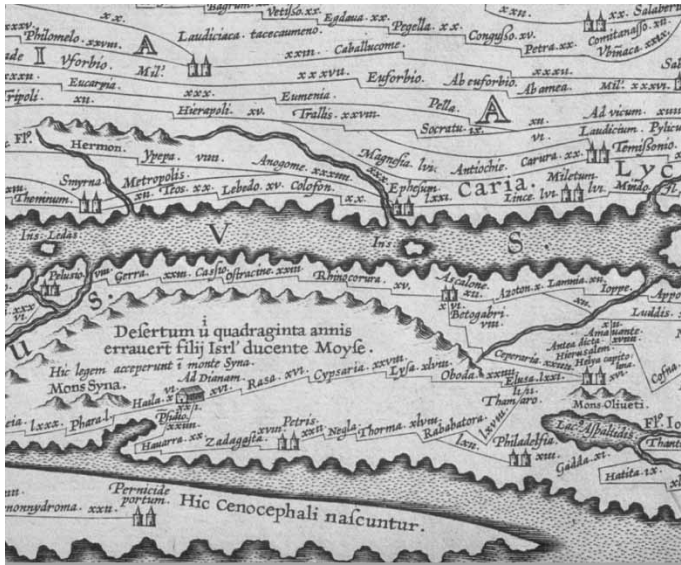
<sup>11</sup> XVI, 4, 4. Pliny writes in his *Natural History*, XXII, 32 and 64, that between Arabia and Gaza there are 65 days by camel.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Ya'qu-bi, 1883, 235. The Arab sources have preserved the memory of the settlement of Ghassan in the Empire. The *Dux* of Antioch allows them to settle with the authorisation of *Nusher* (Anastasios in Arab sources), but demanding in exchange their conversion to Christianity and the payment of taxes.

<sup>13</sup> The quantitative analysis of amphoras suggests that Ayla greatly increased his trade volumes during the Byzantine period, compared with the Nabataean (400% more) and Late-Roman (900% more) periods, and this considering that only 5% of the ancient city has been excavated. Ward 2008, 154.

one<sup>14</sup>. The choice should have been The Incense Route or *Via Odorifera* which, on passing *Phonikon* (Tabuk), ran through *Palaestina Tertia* to Petra, where it bifurcated: one branch running through *Palaestina Tertia* to Gaza, in *Palaestina Prima*. Why choose a route which crosses the desert, instead of using the *cursus publicus*, and the safety it offers?

Fig. 1. Tabula Peutingeriana. Piece of the Ayla-Petra stages



The *Tabula Peutingeriana* shows the north-south stations in the Transjordan lowlands. This main artery was assumedly the official *vehiculatio* and *cursus publicus* used by the Roman administration and Roman officials. The details of the itinerary and the stages that are located between Ayla and Petra are as follows:

-After *Haila*, there is the station of *Praesidio*, a XXI millia passuum. In XXIV millia passuum we find the station of *Hauarra*; after this we find *Zadagatta*, on XX millia passuum towards the north, and *Petris*, on XVIII

<sup>14</sup> On the contrary: “The Sinai desert would have been crossed by caravans travelling from Petra and Eilat (Ayla)”, Hezser 2011, 76. Graf 2007, 175, is unaware of the reference that Shahîd makes about Sinai, and maintains that the animals were moved from Ayla to Gaza crossing the Negev.

*millia passuum*<sup>15</sup>. Also to be found in the Tabula are the cities founded by the Nabataeans, Oboda and Elusa, which are situated in the Negev on the Petra-Gaza route. The names and distances of the Tabula Peutingeriana can be identified with the Roman ruins at Sadaqa (*Zadagatta*), Humayma (*Hauarra*)<sup>16</sup> and Khirbet Al Khâlde (*Praesidio*). These settlements would not be the only *mansiones* or *stationes* on the *Via Traiana Nova*, as it was common in other Roman roads. Besides, the expansion of this settlement pattern in the region, taking advantage of most of these busy Nabataean trade routes, resulted in the construction of additional roads and branches which implemented the main artery. For instance, one of the latter would lead to Udruh, the Roman *Augustopolis*, 11 kilometres from Petra, where the *Legio Vi Ferrata* was supposed to be located, and whose activities continued in the Byzantine period until it fell into the hands of the Muslims in the year 630.

On the sixth century, the Beersheeba Tax Edict makes reference to the following settlements: Adroa (Udruh), Auarra (Humayma), where at least five Byzantine churches have been found among its ruins, *Zadagatta* (Sadaqa) and Ammatha (al Hammama), near Petra (Alt, 1921).

The 125 kilometres between Petra and Ayla are documented with 45 milestones, some of them dating back to the third and fourth centuries. This section seems to have maintained its significance as there are anepigraphic milestones, which refer to the Byzantine tradition of filling the milestones and adding to them painted texts (these have not been preserved) (Graf 1995, 141-167). The length of the journey is not known as, despite the existence of *mutationes* along the route, the difficulty of the transport overrules the possibility of calculations. The average mules coach would travel 50-60 miles a day, depending on the amount of hours, which were usually about ten.

The trade between Petra and Ayla during the Byzantine period has been archaeologically verified, firstly, by the large amount of fish remains (eaten in Petra) found in the excavations. Secondly, by a possible interregional trade of agricultural goods reaching Mecca<sup>17</sup>. Once the trade of incense, spices and luxury items was interrupted, the Petra economy started to be based on agriculture, namely cereals, oil and grapevine.

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<sup>15</sup> Graf 1995, 5.

<sup>16</sup> In the Byzantine period, *Hauarra* maintained its defensive position in which, according to *Notitia Dignitatum*, a native unit of cavalry archers (*equites sagitarii indigenae*) participated, although they might have rode dromedaries instead of horses.

<sup>17</sup> Vid. Ward 2008, 182-183, 187-188.

Fig. 2. Milestone on the *Nova Via Traiana*

After arriving in Petra, they would continue their journey through Wadi Araba and the Negev up to Gaza. There is evidence of the Petra-Gaza route in Pliny<sup>18</sup>, although he is mistaken when he claims that Petra is 600,000 steps far from Gaza and 135,000 steps far from the Persian Gulf. On this route several deposits have been dug and, as a result, it is known that this route was equipped with housing and towers built by the Nabataeans and later improved and maintained by the Romans. In addition, the roads used in the Roman-Byzantine period had clear boundaries, sooth slopes, flights of steps and they were signalled with milestones. It is reasonable to think that these roads continued in service until the Arab conquest because they were maintained by the Ghassanids (Shahid, 2009, 24).

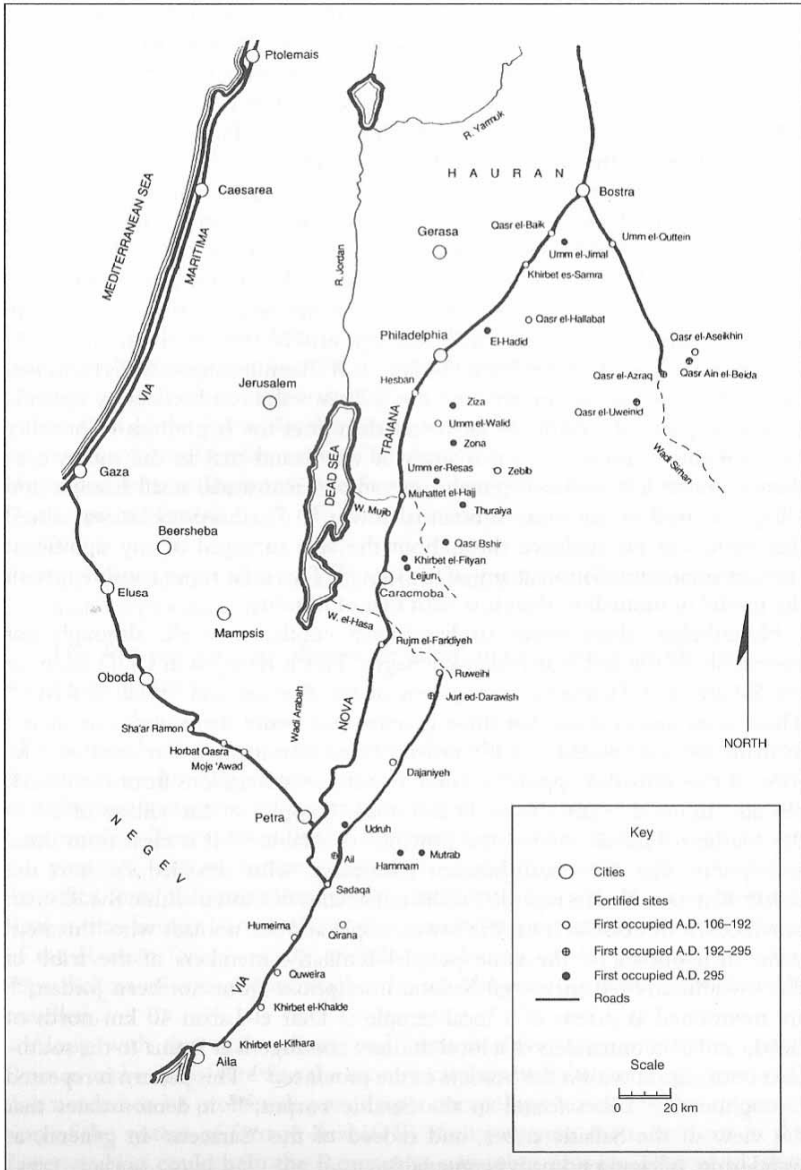
After leaving Petra and before getting to the Negev, the caravans crossed Wadi Araba, which was highly protected on account of the importance of their copper mines in Feinan (*Phaino* in Roman-Byzantine). They carried on crossing the so called *Heptápolis* of *Palaestina Tertia*<sup>19</sup> and other cities until arriving in Gaza (Shereshevski, 1991). Apart from the Petra-Oboda-Gaza route through Wadi Araba, which is the best documented on, there existed another route which, further north, crossed Mampsis and Beersheba.

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<sup>18</sup> *N.H. (Natural History)*, VI, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Kurnub, Oboda, Nessana, Subeita, Elusa, Saadi and Rubeibeh.

Fig. 3. The Incense Route, Petra-Gaza sector and *Nova Via Traiana*. Source: Young, 2001, 131)



One of the main cities in the northwest branch is the aforementioned Oboda. This Nabataean city was very damaged by an earthquake at the end of the fifth century. Surrounding the original city a wall was built, including an area of caves dug and inhabited until the Byzantine period. Also in the Byzantine period, on the fifth and sixth centuries, a citadel and a monastery with two churches were built in the acropolis. One of these churches was dedicated to Saint Theodore. The city was completely destroyed by an earthquake at the beginning of the seventh century.

In the city of Elusa, like Oboda founded by the Nabataeans, the archaeological excavations have been hampered by the presence of quicksand in the area around the city. Despite these problems, some Nabataean streets, two churches, a theatre, a wine cellar and a tower have been discovered. Stephanos of Byzantium mentions Elusa as belonging to the province of *Arabia Petraea* and earlier to *Palaestina Tertia*. In Hilarion's biography, Hieronymus states that in the third century there was a temple devoted to Aphrodite, but Elusa (or Haluza) was later a diocese belonging to Roman Catholicism in the ecclesiastical province of *Palaestina Tertia*, lead by the bishop of Petra<sup>20</sup>.

On the other route, the northeast, the main city was Mampsis, after Petra one of the best preserved Nabataean cities. The buildings of the city continued being used in the third and fourth centuries and, at the end of the third century, a wall was built to protect it. At the start of the fifth century, two churches, Saint Nile and the Eastern Church, were built, and they were used until the Sassanid invasion (614-636). Although Mampsis was greatly aided by the Byzantine authorities on account of being a border town, it declined in the Justinian period. The other important city of this route, Beersheba, was abandoned by the Byzantines on the seventh century. As we see, these cities were in a period of vigorous expansion during the time of this journey.

In the writings by the Pilgrim Egeria in the fourth century, she refers to the *cursus publicus*: "Now there is a fort, with an official and some soldiers, who is now ruled by Roman authority; and as was their habit they accompanied us to the next fort..." (Arce, 1996, 205). To sum up, contrary to Shahîd's view of using the route through the Sinai desert, and based on what is written by Egeria, it appears reasonable to deduce that the chosen route by the man of Ayla to move the animals from the port of his city to Gaza was the Petra-Gaza branch on the Incense Route. This branch is provided with cities, forts, housing and other facilities, as opposed to the

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<sup>20</sup> Vita Sancti Hilarionis in *Patrologia Latina* XXIII, col. 41.

routes across the Sinai Desert. These latter routes were the destination of many Christian pilgrimages (like Egeria herself or the Pilgrim of Bordeaux), willing to see the phenomenon of monks and hermits; however, those routes are not useful when it comes to ensuring that one elephant and two giraffes are delivered to the Emperor.

## **IV.**

### **FROM THE FRONTIERS TO THE NEW ROME**



THE INFLUENCE OF THE ORIENT  
ON THE DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION  
OF AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS' *RES GESTAE*:  
STAGING, CONDUCT AND ORNAMENT<sup>1</sup>

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For very different reasons the idea of the 'Orient', its reality and its conceptuality – the values, characteristics and vices it embodies, or are attributed to – and its influence on the Western world, is very fashionable nowadays; especially from the point of view of the 'otherness'. A discourse in which both, 'East'/'West', are seen as the result of a dialogue sustained through a tradition organised by western literature itself (Said 1994, 5), in its thought, imagery and vocabulary. This has been a long process in Antiquity, from the struggle with Troy in Homeric epic poetry, the establishing of certain commonplaces in Aischylos' *The Persians* (and its 'historical' configuration in Herodotos), the special nuances it acquired through the figure of Alexander – with the infinite possibilities that this opened up and its varied reflection and use in the Roman world through Augustan propaganda – and then, finally, in the Empire, with the figures that have included (negatively) its oriental essence and characteristics (from Caesar to Nero; Elagabalus to Carinus and Diocletian). The understanding of such process has allowed for the modification of commonplaces in which the discourse of power was to operate in the West (value, dignity, sense of independence, justice and liberty, responsibility...); and, verging on the terrain of myth, in the Orient itself, as examined amply

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been done in the context of two research projects: *Emoción, gesto y actio en tres formas de relato historiográfico latino en la Antigüedad tardía* (*Res gestae, biografía y panegírico*), funded by the Junta de Castilla y León (SA018A11-1) and *La actio en la historiografía latina de época imperial*, funded by the Spanish former Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (FFI2011-29055)

and with documentary evidence by Briant (2002), and by Curtius' account, well illustrating a staged paradigm of the triumph and decadence of Alexander. Among the most notable traces, we could pinpoint the choleric and inflexible despotism of the rulers<sup>2</sup>, with thousands of servants; the hedonism of his *luxurious* lifestyle, which reaches as far as his tents<sup>3</sup>, or the pomp in his funerals (Q. Curtius IV 10.24); the cowardice of his peoples<sup>4</sup>, and the pride of his kings – a detail that Ammianus advocates generically of the Arsacid Empire<sup>5</sup> (23.6.5), before applying it specifically to the Persian Shapur. In the case of the latter, *celsior* on his arrival in Amida (21.7.6)<sup>6</sup>, he achieves such a degree of pride<sup>7</sup>, that he is about to be

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<sup>2</sup> These features that will be adopted by Alexander (*irascor/pervicacis...animi*; X 3.6), shortly before his death, when giving the Macedonian arms to the young Persian soldiers (X 3.13-14).

<sup>3</sup> Antiochus set up tents made of gold and silk, surrounded by waters flowing musically and roses brought from everywhere, and with him there were *virginum atque puerorum*: he is a king already defeated by *luxuria*, and will soon be defeated too by A. Glabrio (Fl. I 24[II 8],9). The description of Herodes, Zenobia's stepson (TT 16.1), is highly typical: *homo omnium delicatissimus et prorsus orientalis et Graec[iae] luxuriae, cui erant sigillata tentoria et aurati papilionis et omnia Persica*. For Darius' own *luxuria*, see QC III 11.23; cf. n. 8

<sup>4</sup> Livy makes a contrast between the Gauls' stoutness and boldness at the beginning of the battle and their loss of strength and courage during the combat (5.44.3, and 5.48.3). He also remarked that the Galatians' weakness and lack of energy (38.17.2-7) were a consequence of being too close to the East, as Florus too says: *illa genuina feritas eorum Asiatica amoenitate mollita est*. Galatians inspire terror with their shouting, body size and boldness, but they are easily restrained by sweat, thirst, exhaustion, ... (I 27[II 11],4). Ammianus (AM 25.1.18) uses this topic when describing the Persians, who are accustomed to fight at distance and so, imperfect defenders (... *saepe languidis in conflictu artius pes pede conlatus graviter obsistebat*...). If they saw their forces fleeing, they would generally chase the enemy away with a storm of arrows. Darius (QC III 11.11) reaches a milestone before Issus: he runs away leaving (*indecore*, unnecessarily according to Curtius) his chariot —symbol of power, visibility, and wealth— and all his emblems. Once again, as Gruen said (2011, 4), staying apart from clichés, what really matters (and what ancient descriptions suggest) are the shades of meaning in differences

<sup>5</sup> *Solis fratres et Lunae*, ... (cf., also, the start of his missive to Constantius, 17.5.3); later, his own pride would put an end to them (25.6.7)

<sup>6</sup> An adjective frequently used to describe arrogance (Viansino 1985, 218, I 1b and II 1b); also *tumidus* (Shappur 30.2.3; Julian 21.9.3; Constantius 21.16.15) and *turgidus* (Valens 29.1.18: *regaliter t.*),

<sup>7</sup> And of foolishness: he believes that, when seeing him *statim obsessi omnes metu exanimati supplices venirent in preces* (19.1.4)

struck by a *tragula* because his face and the colourfulness of his adornment (*ob decora... insignia*), make him easily identifiable (19.1.4-5) –; his treasures<sup>8</sup>, rich garments<sup>9</sup>, and precious stones, which, alongside the ornament, beauty, and *lascivia* of his women<sup>10</sup> excited the imagination and covetousness of the western world – even Ammianus never ceases to echo it; in theory and detail, in the *excursus* (23.6.84)<sup>11</sup>: armlets, necklaces, gems and pearls; and in practice, as we shall see later. We could also add the famous eunuchs, or the *proskynesis*, which Alexander tried to implement, with serious consequences. Significantly, and it is the only detail that Ammianus reproaches Diocletian: unlike his contemporaries (A. Victor; Eutropius, and *Historia Augusta*), who concentrate more on the clothes and the crown<sup>12</sup>, the historian points to the detail, its “foreign” origin, and “typical of kings” (15.5.19)<sup>13</sup>, and it is in stark contrast with the traditional Roman system – then the Saracens will give Julian a golden crown, and they will adore it *tamquam mundi nationumque suarum dominum...* (23.3.8). All commonplaces, in short, which, despite being real, have marked his imagery and shaped the spectacle of power and the paradigm of social conduct of nobility and emperors<sup>14</sup>, as well as culture

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<sup>8</sup> These depictions are common: a good example of them, apart from the well-known capture of the booty at Issus (QC III 11.19-23) is the abundance and quality of the booty at Gaugamela (QC V 1.10). However, Darius is well aware that all that —gold, luxurious goods, concubines and eunuchs... — will be useless at the battlefield (V 1.6-8). India surpasses Persia in riches (VIII 9.23): rivers sweep along with gold, the sea offers pearls and gemstones (§ 18); and all noblemen wear earrings and bracelets... (§ 21).

<sup>9</sup> QC III 13.7

<sup>10</sup> For ornament and beauty, examples are well known. For *lascivia*, see the famous description of banquets and orgies in Babylon, which alludes to men tolerance with this behavior (QC V 1.36-38).

<sup>11</sup> In theory, when Ammianus describes the Persian clothing. In practice, when he tells the story. The mention to pearls (*margaritae* § 85) allows him to begin a short *excursus* on their making (§ 86). He tells as well the story of a soldier who found a bag full of pearls when looting the Persian camp, and threw them out ignorant of their value, keeping only the bag (22.4.8).

<sup>12</sup> The *Historia Augusta* (*HA*) blames Carinus (Car. 17.1); and the epitomators, beginning with *Enmans' Kaisergeschichte* (*EKG*) blame Diocletian: A. Victor (39.2), shortly (cf. *Epitome de Caesaribus*, n. 31); also Eutropius (9.26).

<sup>13</sup> The episode of Sarracens' *adoratio* to Julian (23.3.8) should be remembered.

<sup>14</sup> Curtius repeats this cliché: Alexander is able to restrain and be merciful (III 12.21; V 3.15; ...) until he becomes a Persian, driven by wine and pride (for a

(literature and art). Specifying the main points of interaction, and adjusting the parameters in which the dynamics of philosophical, historical and literary judgements usually operate, and, more simply, those artistic manifestations or the typology of human conduct in which they are seen, embodied or defined, has required complex examination. In particular, that of the ruler, symbol<sup>15</sup> and driver of the action<sup>16</sup>, and representation and mirror of everything else<sup>17</sup>; but, also, those of the ones who act as complements and reflections, or relief, of their own manifestations: the nobles, the people who surround, enhance or encircle him<sup>18</sup>, and his subjects and soldiers. Details, such as the Greeks struggling for their “freedom”<sup>19</sup>, and the Persians because “their king looks at them” (Briant, 2002, 304<sup>20</sup>) – not to admire their valour, but to compensate them afterwards, depending on whether they have demonstrated it, or not<sup>21</sup> –,

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summary, IX 10.24-26: wine, pride and excessive overspend); for more details, Ceaucescu 1974, 153-168.

<sup>15</sup> Shappur, vain as usual, *tot regum et gentium dominum praedicans* (19.1.6; cf. also, 17.5.3, and supra, n. 5), considers himself a “living temple”. He becomes deeply furious when he is almost hit by an attack, at the walls of Amida (19.1.6); cf. infra, n. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Ammianus admits his lack of interest in telling some sort of events (28.1.15); he prefers to avoid trivialities (26.1.1). He does not want, as it has been said (Selem 1971, 62), to move away from common people problems, but to concentrate in the information given by the powerful élites (imperial or local). Common people will play a different role: they will be portrayed suffering for injustices and abuse of power by emperors or imperial officers.

<sup>17</sup> This may also occur in the opposite direction: his attitude to other people defines him (cf. Julian, who shortly before his death, chooses to endure hunger with his soldiers and barely eats a *pultis portio ... exigua*, 16.5.5 and 25.2.2)

<sup>18</sup> Ammianus recalls the devious environment of the Persian court (*fallacissimae gentis*), from which it is quite difficult to obtain trustworthy news, considering the way this court works (21.13.4). Similar problems affect Constantius’ court, dominated by the *cruenta blanditia* of its members (14.5.4) and worsened by the *adulatorum cohorts*. The greed of these powerful courtiers makes them commit all kind of misdeeds (16.8.11-13). A. Victor blames the emperor for their tolerance with the governors, the army, the *ministorum mores* and the control exercised by the *apparitores* (42.25).

<sup>19</sup> Diodorus XI 7.1

<sup>20</sup> Xerxes does this in Salamis, looking at the ships (Briant 2002, 303 and 197); also in Thermopylae, in Abydos or Doriscus

<sup>21</sup> His secretaries “recorded the names of the valiant warriors”, according to Herodotos (VII 100; III 128, 3). Curtius describes a similar fact, although not as evident (III 11.9).

are a good illustration of the contrast of interests. It is illustrative, however, that centuries later Julian himself, after attentively observing the behaviour of his men, was to reward them *navalibus... coronis et civicis et castrensibus* (24.6.16). As far as Xerxes is concerned, whose men fought less out of conviction than for a reward, he becomes the prototype of that "spectator king"<sup>22</sup> who uses scenic means to judge the behaviour of others (like Julian), as much as he himself, or his descendant Darius III, uses his and that of his court to channel his power over his subjects. The value of 'representation' ('*stage performance*'), the "spectacle" that Ammianus emphasises (16.12.57)<sup>23</sup>, as a means of illustrating, expressing and understanding a profound political and human condition, a distinctive tone, particular in one aspect or another, carries thus cardinal importance. Understanding its mechanisms, guidelines and purpose contributes to understanding the ends of a ruler who uses it, just as Augustus tried to do with his shaping of the Principality and of the future imperial system. According to Suetonius, Augustus' last words were to ask his friends "if they thought he had properly represented the pantomime of life", which in itself reveals his awareness of the power that the method acquires (A 99.1)<sup>24</sup>. Also Constantius II, in clear possession of his own worth, applies it perfectly in his spectacular and pretentious arrival in Rome (16.10.11)<sup>25</sup>. A power whose substance, inner and outer, for good and for evil, Rome had been importing and transposing from that reviled Orient into its own

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<sup>22</sup> *Perpetual spectator*, is defined by Briant (2002, 304). Julian will also be a "spectator" for his soldiers: witness, judge and model (*spectator probatorque gestor*, 24.5.11). Ironically, the notary Gaudentius, who was sent to Gaul to "spy" Julian (17.9.7), expects Constantius to acknowledge this misdeed (21.7.3)

<sup>23</sup> ... *velut in theatriali spectaculo*... "For the Greek authors, the combats were veritable spectacles that unfolded before the king's eyes" says Briant (2002, 304). Livy also remarks the "spectacle" in military contexts, like in the chase of Hannibal's fleet in front of the Rhodians, before Myonessus (37.24.6); as well as in gladiator fights, triumphs (45.39.6, on the one after Pydna), or *ovationes* (26.21.9); and in the triumph that V. Virrio wants to prevent (26.13.15). Curtius (III 13.11) knows well the potential of these scenes: his story constitutes a perfect example of dramatic *actio*.

<sup>24</sup> The closing verses of drama, with the traditional expression "applaud", are in Greek.

<sup>25</sup> Pride, affectation, hieratism, ...: *quae licet adfectabat, erant tamen haec et alia quaedam in citeriore vita patientiae non mediocris indicia, ut existimari dabatur, uni illi concessae*. The problem set out by Breebart (1987, 89-108) on Augustus, concerning the contrast between appearance and reality is how much "appearance" is politically tolerated without being considered as manipulation.

territories: from the “luxury” of the “mercenary consul” M. Vulso (*AVC*, 38.45.9) in his campaign against the Galatians (189 B.C.<sup>26</sup>), with the contribution of Sulla<sup>27</sup>, to the ‘perfect’ usage of all of it, which the propaganda of the *Princeps* attributed successfully to Mark Antony (*immensa vanitas homini*<sup>28</sup>): his *furor* would lead him to death on accepting the imposition of a *mulier Aegyptia* who required the *Romanum imperium* as a *premium libidinum*. It is the same conversion *in monstrum*, with identical *ebrietas* as cause and consequence (Fl. II 21[IV 11],2), which Alexander modelled and characterised until it turned him from worthy sovereign of free men into a Persian despot<sup>29</sup>; a visually rich and coloristic image, which the orientalised triumph well embodied – Florus’ description is perfect in its evocative synthesis<sup>30</sup> –, but which was to continue to be delineated and refined over the years as a characteristic landmark of imperial power. It may be unnecessary to review the commonplaces of the use of silk and the purple, jewellery, the golden mantle and the diadem, which, according to the anonymous *Epitome*, Aurelian was the first to use (35.1)<sup>31</sup>, or the footwear embroidered with

<sup>26</sup> This is according to L. Furius Purpurio and L. E. Paulus, who were among the ten legates of Vulso. They were firmly opposed to awarding the general a triumph.

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch, after his brief account of the Asian campaign (XXIV), tells some important innovation introduced by Sulla in his “sumptuous and regal triumph” (XXXIV 1): some of the most illustrious exiles (who were recently allowed to return to the city) wore crowns and greeted Sulla as their “father and saviour”. Then, when his achievements were counted, those he owed to Fortune were separated from those that were achieved by himself. Last but not least, he adopted the *cognomen Felix* (L. C. Sulla *Epafroditus*) and gave his twins the names *Faustus* and *Fausta*.

<sup>28</sup> Florus II 21[IV 11],1-3.

<sup>29</sup> For a summary on this topic, cf. Will-Mossé-Goukowsky (1998, 382-3). Royalty is defined by itself among Greeks and Macedonians: to be king means to have certain “royal” qualities which make an individual suitable to rule over men. This means the king has special rights but also important duties: he is strongly committed to his people. His relationship with the gods, who are the givers of victory, acquires special importance. Quite different is the Eastern conception of kingship, symbolised by the *diadema* (cf. *infra*). Here, the king is considered the only giver of rights and privileges: courtiers and subjects are absolutely dependent on him.

<sup>30</sup> It is an impressive as well as graphical description (II 21[IV 11], 3).

<sup>31</sup> *Primus apud Romanos diadema capiti innexuit, gemmisque et aurata omni veste, quod adhuc fere incognitum Romanis moribus visebatur, usus est*. This has been said before of Caligula (*Primus diademate imposito dominum se iussit appellari*, 3.8). It summarizes, with some changes, the report by A. Victor (4.13). According to

gems<sup>32</sup>, because it was well known by any specialist on this epoch. However, determining some of the less well-known nuances of this process helps us to achieve a better understanding of its scope; it is important, as Schneider (2007, 51) summarised, to see “how and by whom Roman images of the Oriental were shaped and perceived, and how these images functioned within, and contributed, to the culture of imperial Rome”.

In the case of Ammianus it is difficult, however, because the account is long and with many nuances, within general, well-defined contrasts, and with his own, very marked ones as a means of expression. A wide range of possibilities have to be taken into account, avoiding at the same time oversimplification<sup>33</sup> and the most obvious examples, because it is not easy to define the adaptation of the language of power – the physical one of postures (gestures and movements), and representations (images, ornaments, and decoration), and the literary and expressive ones –, exceptional cases apart, and in those striking elements favoured by epitomists because they are as obvious as they are distinctive, and do not require any commentary which they cannot elicit, given the synthetic style they use. In fact, by adapting to a particular time, the interest aroused among the Athenian aristocracy is rather the exception than the rule, despite the opposition to the Achaemenid monarchy and what it represented, its fashion, and its most important elements – those refined oriental materials; those servants, those eunuchs, so hated later in the fourth century for their power and their wickedness, in general<sup>34</sup>–; or

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the epitomator, this has been the main cause of Caligula's assassination by Chaerea (cf. § 14: *qua causa*).

<sup>32</sup> Criticism suggests these rulers had abandoned traditional values concerning freedom and equality.

<sup>33</sup> There is a clear contrast between barbarians and Orientals: the former are bold and cruel. Good examples of this characterisation in Ammianus are the Scoti and the Picts (20.1.1); the *Alamanni* and their kings, *barbara feritate certaminum rabiem undique concitante* (16.12.2); or even Nevitta: ... *et subagrestem et, quod minus erat ferendum, celsa in potestate crudelem* (21.10.8). However, Eastern cities described in the *excursus* are said to be wealthy and splendidous (14.8); their kings are proud (*praetumidi*), and worshipped with great honours (23.6.5-6) and to cause any harm to the king is considered a sacrilege, as Shapur's attitude during the siege of Amida shows (19.1.6; cf. n. 15).

<sup>34</sup> Ammianus uses this topic as an instrument of political criticism: despotism, adulation, suspicion... (Toucher 2005, 61, n. 27; and 63: “In the mind of Ammianus, eunuchs had an emphatic part to play in the decline of Rome, and the destruction of his heroes”). There is an important exception: the eunuch Eutherio is

something as representative (of those warm places) and illustrative (because of their power of evocation and graphicness), such as the use of parasols and fly swats (García Sánchez, 2007, 43). In the case of the *Historia Augusta* this happens even more so, because the topic and the details are at the service of a simplistic characterisation of the *bonus/malus* emperor. For sure, at this stage of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the implementation of these aesthetic norms of ornament and protocol taken from the Orient was too well established to be significant in itself; it only finds renewed interest in nuances, of one complexion or another, which are the factors we are going to try to bring forward, whether their use was dramatic (i), for example, the fact that Valentinian was invested with the mantle and diadem does not have the same value as a simple declaration of his election (26.2.3), as the reference to Julian also wearing purple, just at the time when, increasingly proud of himself, (21.1.4 and 1), he already knows from the omens that Constantius is about to die (21.1.4); and it is equally important to note the contrast between Shapur before Amida (infra), who is about to receive a wound, and the daring posture of Julian, trying to explore an unknown fortress before reaching Ctesiphon, in which he is also about to be struck by a shot from the walls (24.5.6), when the fact that now he is saved, only just, increases the tension vis-à-vis the forthcoming end; or exemplary (ii) since it is illuminating to find that the *gravitas Populi Romani*, which in Livy, not by chance, defines the senators who prepare to die seated on their *sellae* before the Gauls (5.41.8<sup>35</sup>), and linked to *clementia* (AVC 45.17.7; and 42.42.9), seemingly embodying the essence of Rome's political virtue<sup>36</sup>, has practically disappeared from Ammianus' characterisation. In fact, in the *Res Gestae*

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eulogized by the author (16.7.5-8) without any negative sense, as it happens in some portraits of emperors. The partial eulogy of Menophilus (16.7.9-10) must be seen as the natural complement to Eutherio's. Menophilus was a eunuch of Mithridates, who committed suicide after being forced to kill Drypetina, the king's daughter, in order to prevent her from being captured by Manlius Priscus, Pompey's legate.

<sup>35</sup> This passage gathers a great amount of words related to Roman *dignitas* and *maiestas*. It also gives the best definition for these two concepts, which go further than mere external appearance.

<sup>36</sup> An important argument is offered by Perseus (42.42.9), because he attributes these values to the *fama* of the *Vrbs* among its allies. While the concept of *gravitas* is used by Livy to describe the weight of the arms (31.42.4), or the storm..., he equally applies it to Indibilis, who speaks and behaves "unlike a barbarian" (27.17.10) with "modesty and dignity".



oriental solemnity dominates scenes from the entrance of Constantius II in Rome (16.10), but it does not seem to the historian that such dignity is fitting for such an Emperor, or at least it does not seem to be one of his attributes, although he does not move a muscle in his face nor does he turn his head – an important detail for the historian, who will also emphasise it later in his portrait (21.16.7). So, although the adjective (*gravis*)<sup>37</sup> is used a great deal, because the ambience and the circumstances are frankly difficult, the *gravitas* – already on some occasions, such as the “gravity” of an illness that manages to cause death; that of Constantius rightly so (21.15.2) –, is only applied with its traditional value in two instances: in that of Pretextatus, senator *praeclarae indolis gravitatisque priscae*; and in Julian’s anger when faced with the protest of the soldiers because of the frugality of the reward he offers them (24.3.3); both circumstances in which the emphasis marks the choice and characterisation of the two characters; the same will happen in the *Historia Augusta*, where its reference is limited to cases of ‘venerable’ emperors (A. Pius<sup>38</sup>, Nerva; Gordian III; Claudius II, 13.5; or to the Senate itself, A 40.1; AS 1.5). On one occasion, even (the *excursus* on the vices of the Senate and the Roman people), its appearance involves real sarcasm: the senators, hitherto noble representatives of the government of a regime in which their role was ranked with that of many ‘kings’<sup>39</sup>, now feign hypocritically *incedere gravitate composita...* (28.4.21). And the *fascēs*<sup>40</sup>, which illustrated and embodied an attitude – *dignitas*, and pre-eminent importance (*eminet*) –, and a political system – the *imperium* which is exercised and served<sup>41</sup>, but for the benefit of all –,

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<sup>37</sup> It is used for *vulnus, expeditio, causa,...*

<sup>38</sup> It is the way in which A. Pius controls *seditiones* (12.2). It is also a typical eulogy for A. Severus (12.3). Logically, *gravitas* is denied to Gallienus (3.9), who cannot bear the burden of his father’s (a prisoner at the time) prestige.

<sup>39</sup> As in the famous anecdote of Cineas reporting to his master Pyrrhus that the Roman senate was “an assembly of kings” (Fl. I 13[18],20).

<sup>40</sup> *Fascēs* are now practically unseen; they will only appear when Julian criticises Constantine for giving the consulship to barbarians (21.10.8). In other cases, like in the *excursus* on the vices of the senate and people of Rome, the allusion to *virgae* is sarcastic: they make the dignitaries seem “important”, even when they are followed by weavers, service of the kitchen, idle plebeians, and slaves (14.6.17). However, the word *Fascēs* is applied to the “bunch” of letters (15.5.3; and 21.16.11); and to the “bundles of straw and firewood” used to burn the house where Valens was supposedly hiding (31.13.15).

<sup>41</sup> Florus’ phrase, more concise and powerful than Livy’s, summarises the influence of Etruria, homeland of Tarquinus *omnia denique decora et insignia, quibus imperio dignitas eminet* (I 1[5],6).

have disappeared to give way to that trite diadem<sup>42</sup>, or the “royal garment”, which become symbols of something more than power: the former lies beside the body of Alexander on the *regia sella*, with his arms and the ring that Perdiccas adds (QC 10.6.4), and it is the proud emblem that Shapur flaunts, sporting the golden image of the ram – made popular by Alexander’s coins–, when he arrives in Amida on horseback, leading the troops and the whole retinue of dignitaries and peoples of different races (19.1.3). Nevertheless, beyond these objective data, and the strength of their representativeness, what matters is the symbolism that they are made to perform: Constantine will use it systematically (*Epit.* 41,14); and Ammianus, who identifies it correctly with the symbol of that “royal majesty” (17.11.4) – denigrated by Elagabalus<sup>43</sup>–, does not seem to be very happy with the ostentatious and dazzling symbols that Julian, already Augustus, uses in the games of his *Quinquennialia*, unlike the modest one that crowned him at the start of his Principality (15.8.15/21.1.4). It is one of the details which points to a substantial change in his personality and life<sup>44</sup>, a topic to which we shall return later.

Similarly, in classical historians what determines the use or importance of many of the references is the literary and stylistic reasoning, in whatever area it may be in, and within the specific features on which each author places his stake. In Ammianus, the analysis is complex due to the different techniques he uses: the contrastive one, cornerstone of the account<sup>45</sup> (Barnes, 1998, 15ff.; 187-195; Matthews, 1989, 460-61); the ‘accumulative’ one, his trump card for that ‘funereal Baroque’ (Barthes,

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<sup>42</sup> The *diadema* had been used as a pretext for Tiberius Gracchus’ murder (Fl. II 2[III 14]),7). Pompey gives it back when offered by Tigranes (Eutr. VI 13). When dealing with Caesar, Florus prefers the expression *distincta radiis corona* (Fl. II 13[IV 2],91), then he chooses the more neutral *regni insignia*. Gallienus’ characterization must be remembered: *radiatus saepe processit* (HA, Gal. 16.4). This sort of crown was at first reserved for deified emperors; later on, with the adoption of Oriental manners, also living emperors began to wear it. Notwithstanding that, the use of this expression implies some criticism of both rulers.

<sup>43</sup> He will mock at imperial regalia, including the *diadema*, and will wear them to embellish his face and look more feminine (Hel. 23.3-5).

<sup>44</sup> On the issue, in that case linked to another important aspect (*Fortuna-fatum/arbitrium dei*/human will) cf. Moreno 2012, 166 and n. 30.

<sup>45</sup> With all its elements: pure contrast; counterpoint; antithesis; *variatio*, or simple comparison. This procedure emphasises a rather usual method of composition: “Les contrastes, les parallelisms, les groupes antithétiques binaires ou ternaires sont des moyens classiques d’ Ammien” (Paschoud 1992, 68).

1993, 1247-9)<sup>46</sup> which dominates his darkest levels; or the 'evocative' one ('intertextuality, and allusiveness', in short, Kelly, 2008, 165-175), that capacity to suggest that it constantly forces the reader to recognise his previous references, or those of former authors. In fact, the mechanism is shaped and developed on two levels: (a) the less distinctive, more gradual one (the one of the episodes or syntagmas), but more evident and immediate in its performance, because it works on more limited units (the book; the sequence, or the simple scene).; and (b), the more ambitious and systematic one, because it acts on the structural level, making the contrast, usually dynamic, lead to an antagonistic result in respect of the past, and a frequently tragic, if not fatal, result.

Two examples, one for each case, will illustrate the process. One (a), for this choice of commonplaces and subtle outlines that separate the characteristics of an event occurring in the Orient from another one occurring in the West, or vice versa. Here are two passages that have no transcendental importance, but precisely because of this they are more indicative. Both focus on the unjust tragedy that the most helpless beings suffer in war; in one, just before closing the net against Valens (31.8.7-8), Ammianus tells of the infinite suffering of women: terrified, raped and murdered; some with their foetuses cruelly wounded even before they had given birth; the captured children; and the damsels who preferred to die tortured than to be sullied; bringing it to an end, *in crescendo*, with the tragedy of an unknown person, rich and noble in years gone by, who is "dragged like a beast" (31.8.8) and experiences for himself the unimaginable catalogue of moral misfortunes and physical torture. Ammianus withholds his name, which he neither knows, nor considers relevant, and who might have never existed – maybe he invented him–, in order to highlight with his *exemplum* the 'barbarity' of some '*barbari*' who, free *velut diffractis caveis bestiae*, having run amok through Thrace, put an end to Barzimeres, before doing so with the Roman army and the emperor (31.8.9-10). A scene with the characteristics added in this one does not occur in the Orient. In a fragment in which the operations centre is that area there will be other nuances, as the circumstances of the withdrawal from Nisibis show (26.10.16-9). In this case, what the author emphasises, beyond the widespread lamentations of its inhabitants departing the city, is the performance of young Jovian, who had been reluctant to accept the crown (25.9.4), and who now, exasperated in the face of criticism and his inability to change the situation which he has to

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<sup>46</sup> "...un latin grécissant et pomponné à la mode baroque" (Fontaine 1992, 27).

face – returning the cities and betraying a faithful ally such as Arsaces (25.7.12) —, he has to surrender the city to the noble Bineses. Here, there is neither crudeness nor gratuitous cruelty with macabre notes; there is profound sadness, vain pleas on the part of the nobles and common people (p.2), and the vain hope in the action of a Justice that is useless because it does not exist, and a *Fortuna* against whose action the historian himself cries out for, in vain as well (25.9.7); but, above all, there is a very bitter recrimination<sup>47</sup> against the director of the public scene, the Emperor Jovian, who, for fear of usurpation in distant lands (Gaul or Illyricum) has handed over a city which had embodied the resistance of the area against Persian domination (25.9.8-9). As an ending, the historian concludes that the ashes of Julian will be taken from the city: Prokopios, in charge of burying them in Tarsus, was to disappear from the scene, until his return, now *purpuratus* (25.9.13), in a passage as theatrical as it was tragic (26.6.12-26.9.9).

The second example (b), within the same theme but of a broader sweep and dramatic and structural value, places the two main blocks of the *Res Gestae*: the initial one, dominated by the figure of Julian, and the final one, controlled by the cruelty and anger of Valentinian and Valens, whose death represents the end of the work and, to a large extent, that of ancient Rome.

The antithetical parameters in which we find the Strasbourg (16.12) and Hadrianopolis passages (31.12-13) are quite well known, both the situation and the circumstances, and the antithetical form with which the historian describes them (discursive elements, *variatio*, on different levels and to different degrees, etc.). In the former, in the struggle against the Alamanni, Julian was on the road to victory and advancement in his imperial career, in the Roman practice of conquest and defeating the enemy, which is what always justifies command. In the case of Thrace, on the other hand, he includes the victory of the barbarian enemy and the death of the Emperor – almost a repetition once more of what happened to Decius (whose corpse was not found), and slightly similar to the capture of Valerian –, which are commonplaces to which the historian himself resorts (31.13.13). But for us, within the topic of the influence of the Orient which occupies us now, it is more important to highlight the differences between the ‘similar’ death of the two Emperors: that of Julian, which occurs in the Orient, evokes Alexander’s death, in many details like his famous refusal

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<sup>47</sup> This passage is one among those in which Ammianus expresses his strongest criticism (25.9.8-11) against many important individuals.

to name his successor (25.3.21/QC X 5.5); and it does not include 'barbarous' elements, like that of Valens. Even from its details is absent the hypothesis, that later will be provided (25.6.6), and in which Ammianus does seem to believe – despite attributing the information 'to rumours' – that perhaps he was a Roman with a *telo... Romano*<sup>48</sup>. The fact is neither provided when the wound is inflicted – it is an *hasta*, in that case –, so as not to truncate the dramatic tone of the scene, nor a little later, during his final moments and his portrait. Further on, however, as if in passing, it is mentioned in one of those non "dynamic" episodes (Todorov, 1973, 48-9), neither inane nor useless, which the historian uses to colour the situation<sup>49</sup>, suspending the action, as in an *impasse*<sup>50</sup> – in fact, it is the start of the reign of Jovian, and the withdrawal from Mesopotamia.

Compared to this death and all its particularities, very marked by this oriental echo which subtly dominates it (on the one hand, Alexander, and, on the other, that ill-fated attraction that has taken him to that point), the almost absolute denial of that of Valens (31.13.12-17), because in his case the 'scene', as such only exists in part: in the first version, the information

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<sup>48</sup> ... *audierant enim ipsi quoque referentibus transfugis, rumore iactato incerto, Iulianum telo cecidisse Romano*. The importance of rumour, always tragic and ill-fated (25. 8.13) but also useful to give dangerous information or to explain something difficult to an unreceptive audience (for the use of rumour in Tacitus, cf. Gibson 1998), becomes especially relevant in this case; moreover, Ammianus remarks that rumour generally worsens any given circumstance (15.3.5; 15.5.4). According to Persian accusation, the Romans are *perfidos et lectissimi principis peremptores* (25.6.6).

<sup>49</sup> This "static" fragment reports on some combats that, despite not being decisive, may offer important information: Persian attacks, helped by elephants (which terrify men and horses: 25.6.1-3); the finding of Anatolius' body (§ 4); a camp is set up (§ 5); an accusation by the enemy (§ 6); a new (rejected) attack against Jovian's tent (§ 7); new combats, this time against Saracens (§§ 9-10); another military assault (§§ 11); the German and Gaul soldiers cross the river by swimming and kill a group of Persian (§ 14), and the soldiers wishing to cross the river, because, as the author previously said (§ 11), "to those who are in fear of the worst, even false reports are commonly welcome..."

<sup>50</sup> Not by chance, these events are marked by two important references to Shappur: he receives the (good) news of his enemy's death, and full of conceit, (*inopina prosperitate elatus*) he decides to increase the number of his troops and attack the Roman rearguard (25.5.8-9). Later on, when informed of the Roman's bravery in combat (*fortia facta nostrorum foedas suorum strages et elephantos*) and that soldiers are seeking revenge for his illustrious late Emperor (*post casum gloriosi rectoris*), Shappur will send messengers to sign a peace treaty (25.7.1)

is given without further ado: he fell wounded, he exhaled his last breath and his body disappeared; but, in the second one, that of the two-storey cabin, there is no other description other than in the external part where he was taken by not very skilful people. That of Julian, heroically and tragically wounded in a fight of epic proportions, is dominated by the recreative power of the *evidentia*, with the drive of the *affectus*, and in the development of a perfectly orchestrated staging (*actio*), and many references to other texts and prior situations which increase the impressive effect: after his fall, his own men, unable to see because of the clouds of dust, overwhelmed and faint from the heat, return to the fray, goaded by anger and pain and ready to die if necessary; the Persians, emboldened by initial success, fire arrows, and are backed up by elephants which, since Pyrrhus, in the historic mythology of Rome, have well exemplified oriental might, later almost always pushed aside by Roman *virtus*. It is a commonplace, within the many *evocatio* that Ammianus devises, which acquires all its value if the complicity of readers accompanies it: the play between the pachyderms and the horses requires us to recall the antagonism that Florus aroused by using them in his rhetorical composition of the conquest of Tarentum and the defeat of the king of Epirus (I 13[II 18]); the elephants, despite having terrified the Romans, who were unfamiliar with them, had served to test their valour: to the irritation and surprise of Pyrrhus, those enemy soldiers had not fled horrified at the sight of them, as the wounds on the dead showed, all head on (§§ 8 and 17); then their ranks had been broken by their scattering (§§ 11-14), as later on in Magnesia<sup>51</sup>, where their disarray together with that of the chariots and camels increased the disaster of the royal troops (*AVC* 37.43.9)<sup>52</sup>; and, in the end, they were humiliated in the great triumph celebrated in the Urbe by the humble horses (§ 28), hitherto despised.

Julian dies, then, in a well-known and well-orchestrated choral scene, lying in his tent, surrounded by his own men (*iacens / circumstantes*), downcast and sad (*demissos et tristes*; one a physical term, the other one of morale); he speaks to them serenely (*placide dicta*); he hands over his possessions (testament); asks about Anatolius, and, on learning of his death, “is afflicted”, in a multiple counterpoint of nuances: by the fact

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<sup>51</sup> According to Livy, Antiochus’ elephants were 54, while Roman elephants, which came from Africa, amounted to 16. The former, which came from India, were bigger and more ferocious than the latter (37.45.13).

<sup>52</sup> Soon after, when describing Jovian’s withdrawal, Ammianus will tell again the typical features of elephants (bad odour and a horrifying look), the confusion they create, and the death of some of them (25.6.2-3).

itself – he does not care about his own death, “that he had proudly scorned”<sup>53</sup>; but he did that of his friend; and in his moods: he sobs (*acriterque... ingemuit*); but maintains his authority rebuking those who cry (*flentes*)<sup>54</sup>, so that they will stop doing so (25.4.22). Then, with the auditorium in silence, while he in a low voice talks to Maximus and Priscus – a further counterpoint–, his wound reopens: after drinking some water, like Otho, according to his two biographers<sup>55</sup>, he dies placidly (*vita facilius est absolutus*, 25.3.23). Irrespective of the general tragedy – the death of the Emperor and its projection on Jovian's withdrawal and the general frustration caused by the failure of the campaign –, the ultimate substance of the account, the details are what, besides giving life to the passage, evoking others and contrasting them with many more, elevate it, in different ways, to the category of symbol.

Faced with such a group, ellipsis, or pseudo-ellipsis, of the death and disappearance of Valens – which, as Bal pointed out (1995, 79-80) does not imply that something is lacking in importance, but rather perhaps that it is so painful as to motivate this silence—, ‘evidences’, without verbalizing it, the political and social chaos and the inversion of values in respect of the past that is taking place in the midst of the widespread disaster of the last battle in the work, and, to a certain extent, of traditional Rome. Unlike Julian, whose figure had articulated *in crescendo* the account since Strasbourg, until the turning point caused by his action in

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<sup>53</sup> ... *qui elate ante contempserat suum...* The nuance of pride – not particularly favoured before (*hoc casu elatior Iulianus*, 21.4.7), his speech to the soldiers, when he then admits his elevation to the purple (*ad augustum elatus sum culmen, deo vobisque fautoribus,...*)–, will be clear in the censure that Constantius embarks upon (21.13.13), which, undoubtedly, accompanies the criticism with that of his cronies: some *auxiliaribus paucis* dragged along by *superbia*. It has a counterpart in the *elato animo* with which Constantius scorns popularity. And as a final point in the process – in fact the beginning of the end...–, his reaction (*in immensum elatus*, 22.2.2) when learning of the death of his cousin and that he had had left as his successor; and the introspective judgment with which Ammianus defines his certainty of success, thanks to Fortune and his gifts (22.9.1). In fact, the adverb used during his last moments is not surprising either: *elate ante contempserat suum [sc.mortem]* (25.3.21).

<sup>54</sup> The Macedonian army cried too when they filed past Alexander in his deathbed, who, despite being alive, already looked like a corpse (QC X 5.1).

<sup>55</sup> Both Plutarch (17.1), and Suetonius (O 11) point it out: *sedata siti gelidae aquae potione*. The rhetorical description plays an important role because it gives information as well as it shapes the story, defining with it the ‘actors’ (Bal 1995, 138).

the Orient which we shall see later and which was to end up taking him to his death (16.12.28-34/ 38-41), who, being conscious of the end of his life (25.3.9), behaves with the same serene *maiestas* of bygone days in Strasbourg – *ignarus pavendi nec ira nec dolore percussus* (16.12.3) –, and whose stoicism evokes that of Alexander, who valiantly endured the parade of his men (QC X 5.3), until like Julian, his strength failed him<sup>56</sup>, Valens, who launched into the attack dominated by anger (*urebatur /percussus/ exagitatus...* 31.12.3-4), after the battle, in his final moments and those of the process, is scarcely present. The information about his end is divided: initially (31.13.12), according to an unidentified opinion, the emperor fell wounded by an arrow (*sagitta*), as Julian by the *hasta/telum*, and, with almost no transition, he took his last breath, his body not being found subsequently, given the widespread looting the dead were subjected to. According to another version (*alii dicunt*, § 14), still alive, he was taken to a cabin that was subsequently set fire to by the barbarians, unaware of who was inside it, caused them to miss a good opportunity of seizing prized booty (§14-16). As in the first case, where Ammianus turns to the parallel with Decius, now he evokes (Publius Cornelius) Scipio, killed in the tower in Hispania, also burned to death. The parallelism is brought to a close with the lack of a tomb for both, which is the last honour for human being. The irate and zealous Valens, like the fierce Chnodomarius, counterpoint to Julian earlier in Strasbourg, and a good example of the savage and despotic character, barbarous in short, which the Emperor had acquired since his election, dies in an antithetical situation compared to Julian, whose progress through life, as we shall see, on the road to a non-existent glory in the Orient has ended up involving his tragic death.

In fact, it is precisely on this journey, almost of initiation, for Julian himself where one of the most important examples of this Oriental influence is noted, and in the structural scope of the work, through the personal, human and political performance of Julian. It is a paradigmatic case because of the skill with which the historian applies it, the dramatic play which he offers in a large part of the work, and, of course, the character who embodies it, illustrating the change that takes place in the attitude of the Emperor from the moment when he decides to start his Persian campaign. His figure, gloriously extolled by the historian for his triumph in the West (Strasbourg), is headed for disaster (personal and

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<sup>56</sup> *vigore virium labente* (§ 20) // *fatigata membra reiecit / et vox deficere iam coeperat* (QC X 5.3-4).



politico-military) in that world (military and human) far from the Orient, which will end up turning him into a corpse. Thus, his death will be real; but also ideological: it brings to a close a thought and a tenor (his: a traditional, cultured, philosophical and worthy one, as his last moments represent, with the additional weight of the speech), and an image (a Rome which can no longer remain firm<sup>57</sup>); and opens up a maelstrom of unfortunate events which destabilise the situation and give rise to the ominous future: the infelicitous election of Jovian (25.5); the shameful peace with Shapur (25.7.10-14); the withdrawal of the army, which reminds us of the crossing of the Gedrosian desert by Alexander, and the bitter description of the surrender of Nisibis (25.9); even the ill-fated rebellion of the unworthy Prokopios, to whom he could even have assigned as successor... (26.6.2), in a clearly imperfect decision, as his absurd election and death suggest. On that path, physical yet also vital<sup>58</sup>, Julian manages to lose practically his *gravitas* – albeit Ammianus avoids the harshness of absolute judgement<sup>59</sup> –, thus externalising that personal, subtle change, which ends in logical drama, from the very moment when, seized by inappropriate pride (personal and political), allows himself to be carried away by vanity; a transformation which changes his life and spectacularly defines the two major stages which his career will traverse: the triumphant one of his beginnings, with Gallus (book 14) and Constantius (15-21) as contrastive images, on different levels and planes; and the sad end, with the Persian enemy – and Shapur, as an obligatory reference –, from the moment when he presents his decision to initiate the campaign (22.12.1-2). A decision, states Ammianus, that he had conceived and matured for some time (§ 1) – that is, not prompted by a conjectural or comprehensible reason, in response to an unexpected attack –, and which is justified by two opposing reasons which, separately, and even more so together, accurately define his way of thinking and his hidden thoughts:

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<sup>57</sup> Julian denies the Saracens their gold: in response, they carry out an attack (25.6.10). Julian's attitude – as well as his critics to those who had bought peace with gold (24.3.4) – is a good example of his change of methods. It also anticipates the disaster of Adrianople.

<sup>58</sup> This is the traditional function of a journey: the character undergoes profound change during it, while the arrival implies both an achievement and the end of a transformation. The return tends to be less important, as novels and adventure movies generally depict.

<sup>59</sup> In spite of this reproach, Ammianus occasionally praises his intelligence (24.7.2). Shappur's opinion (*supra*, n. 50; 25.5.8-9) also works as an encomium.

One is politico-moral (a): to avenge offences and past events (§ 1); a commonplace motive, for the development of which Ammianus brings together at least five ill-fated and gory terms, and comes back to the issue of otherness that we raised briefly at the start of this study: the Persian wars had defined a certain pan-Hellenic solidarity (Tuc. III 62<sup>60</sup>), without which, in reality, victory would have interrupted the flow of influences<sup>61</sup> between the two cultures – in dispute since Homer –, despite the theoretical opposition between both and the negative profile of the enemy with his main representative, *mégas Basileús*; the Persian invasion had been the ultimate reason for Alexander’s launching into an encounter with the Great King; and now, *mutatis mutandis*, that is, so falsely or topically as then, Julian uses as an excuse the deaths that have occurred throughout history to launch a campaign which is not improvised and is not due to a military response in reply to an enemy attack; without real *bellum iustum* behind it...

The other (b), personal (22.12.2), it smoothly initiates the transition towards the darker side of the Emperor, and includes three important reasons in its nuances and overall: firstly, “he vehemently longed” (*urebatur*) to carry out the enterprise since “he could not stand peace” (*inpatiens otii*); and dreamed of the sound of the bugles of war (*lituos somniabat et proelia*). Secondly, because his ears “were burning” on hearing the pleas of the kings and princes<sup>62</sup>... And the explanation, with a typically traditional nuance on the commonplace – Rome vengeful of injustices, which always defends her partners and allies –, and a much more theatrical presentation still than the previous one, seems dominated by the semantic field of “heat”, which even appears in positive aspects, for example in his *Panegyric* by Mamertinus (chap. III and V), but here it is a reflection of rage or anger; in short, for the loss of rationality<sup>63</sup>, which is

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<sup>60</sup> On the problem of ‘otherness’ (‘alterity’) in Thucydides, cf. Santiago 1998, 44. Most interestingly, the concept of “barbarian” is scarcely applied to the Persians.

<sup>61</sup> The influence was political and economic, but also cultural: especially in regard to luxury, adornment and ceremonial. A summary can be seen in García Sánchez (2007, 33-49).

<sup>62</sup> ... *recalentibus etiam tum regum precibus et regalium, qui vinci magis posse quam supplices manus tendere credebantur, ornamentis inlustrium gloriarium inserere Parthici cognomentum ardebat.*

<sup>63</sup> Valentinian carries out an attack, moved by his irritation with the Quadi embassy. Before, the author noted the emperor’s lack of tranquility... *ira vehementi percussus et ... tumidior...* (30.6.3). Valens, who launches an inadequate

one of the distinctive notes of the West, compared to oriental intuition, and which had already appeared in the preceding one; and it is a good leitmotif for this stage, in which Valentinian dies of apoplexy, burning up with fever<sup>64</sup> (30.6.3); and both Valens and himself take inappropriate decisions<sup>65</sup>. Furthermore, it anticipates the parallel with Valens who, a victim of envy (*exagitatus*<sup>66</sup>) towards his nephew Gratian, was to decide to launch a suicidal attack to emulate his heroic deeds (31.12.1). In fact, the *urebatur* which before opened the stage direction – and which will later be closed with the *ardebat*, in a sought-after annular composition which intensifies the argument –, it is the same verb, with an identical nuance, which, not by chance, will be later applied to Valens<sup>67</sup> when, “inflamed by the virtues of the egregious adolescent (Gratian)” – whose feat (the victory against the Lentienses, 31.10) he attempted to emulate –, he decided to join the ill-fated final combat<sup>68</sup> (31.12.3); and like Julian for “two reasons”. Because of all this, Ammianus concludes in his third note, again with the idea of delirium and exaltation that the *ardebat* includes, “because he ardently longed to receive the *cognomen* of Parthicus donning the adornment in recognition of his illustrious deeds”. Thus, in such a brief prelude to a process with such a long and tragic reach Ammianus offers a

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attack *procaci quodam calore percussus* (31.12.3; cf. infra, n. 68), dies in a fire, which constitutes a tragic antithesis.

<sup>64</sup> This description becomes an actual theatre scene, performed by two characters that stand in contrast: ‘him’, gone down with a fever, covered by sweat, unable to speak; and, like a tragedy chorus, his servants who unsuccessfully try to help. Barnes underlined “the creative and imaginative powers of a novelist” (1998, 20-31).

<sup>65</sup> For example: when burning the fleet, Julian rebukes his generals (*ob inertiam otiique desiderium*), showing a severe lack of judgement (*consilium*). At Strasbourg, however, Ammianus considered his serenity to be crucial for victory (16.12.3; cf., too, 29.6.11).

<sup>66</sup> Ammianus makes extensive use of participles to show the influence of the events on his characters, their uncertainties and the consequences of their choices. Cf. the *percussus* applied to Valentinian (31.5.10: *verbo tamquam telo percussus*) and to Valens, upset for the escape of Papa (30.1.11: *ante dicti fuga percussus*; e infra, n. 69 and 70). But it also applies to Shappur (30.2.1), mournful for Papa’s death (*maerore gravi percussus*).

<sup>67</sup> As we pointed out earlier, always impatient (31.12.3), agitated, overwhelmed, distrusting, fearful, and incapable of thinking and overcoming problems, to the point of considering the idea of renouncing to the purple (26.7.13).

<sup>68</sup> Later on, Ammianus insists on this explanation: ... *imperator procaci quodam calore percussus isdem occurrere festinabat* (31.12.3).

good sweep of strokes to suggest that less brilliant image of who, up to that time, has been considered his ideal Emperor: he has combined ‘sentiments’<sup>69</sup> with the details of actions, and characterisations<sup>70</sup> – his unbridled yearning for glory and success; the evocation of past triumphs and the need for another one so as to be able to don once again the *ornamenta triumphalia*; the pleas and the downfall of great opponents –; he has used vocabulary to boost the idiosyncrasies of and the contrast between the actors, magnifying by generalisation<sup>71</sup> the scope of the Persian attacks; he has resorted to sensorial, visual and plastic elements – *lituos; supplices manus tendere; ornamentis inlustrium gloriarum inserere* – to properly recreate the atmosphere in the reader’s imagination; and he made the negative clues clear on which he will continue to maintain the examination of Julian’s personality and action in the Orient.

Below, the main block, a not very long one and one which will close with a very good annular composition with the theme of peace turned into a subtle reason for criticism of the Emperor<sup>72</sup>, will set the coordinates for this change and its own end; the passage brings together some of the main elements in the historical action and the political life of Julian: some are his detractors and harsh critics (17.11), unnamed characters, but known to the Emperor – whom they had insulted with the worst descriptions *loquacem talpam et purpuratam simiam et litterionem Graecum* (17.11.1<sup>73</sup>) –, and the readers, and always present in the palace environment; the others are yet unknown factors, which, however, will substantially affect the atmosphere

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<sup>69</sup> *animi robore conceperat celso...*

<sup>70</sup> The *sciens et audiens* which translate the typical *facta et dicta* (“... celle-ci étant faite [sc. *Historia*] à Rome comme en Greece, de *res dictae* autant que de *res gestae*”, Fontaine, 1992: 33) offer an intellectual colour superior to the unthinking motive of other times and other emperors

<sup>71</sup> Ammianus does not give any point of detail with his phrase *per sexaginta ferme annos inussisse orienti caedum et direptionum monumenta saevissima, ad interneccionem exercitibus nostris saepe deletis*. He does not even contrast Gallienus’ defeat by Narses with his subsequent victory, when he captures the imperial family and the harem. With this generalisation, he expects to intensify the description.

<sup>72</sup> As it has been previously noted, Julian cannot tolerate peace (*impatiens otii*). A certain hint of irony must be seen when Ammianus says that expensive ceremonies were done *more pacis*... (§ 8).

<sup>73</sup> Among these descriptions (*loquacem talpam et purpuratam simiam et litterionem Graecum*), there is the implicit irony of his deep knowledge of the Greek cultural world (cf. *infra*).

of the account. In both cases, their action involves important changes in the historical process.

In the first place, the already well-known *obtretractores* of the Emperor, always *desides et maligni* (22.12.3)<sup>74</sup>, who now, a notable *variatio* of the historian, act 'reasonably'; they are the 'good guys'; at least they seem to be, in contrast with the egomaniacal efforts of the Emperor<sup>75</sup>: if they are determined to delay the campaign against Persia it is because "it lacks any sense", they argue, that, "because of a simple change of one person" (of Constantius to him), so much "disorder" is aroused (§ 3: *turbas intempestivas*). An ironic contrast between the common good, used as an excuse – both for the start of the war, and now to halt the preparations – always useful deep down, and the desire of a ruler who, whilst always characterised by thinking more about others than about himself (in short, in the common good), is now shown to be mistaken and driven by his own desire for success. The other novelty which the author plays with is that it should be these same, always ill-fated characters, who for their critical arguments should add a positive reason, and a true one deep down. Logical of course: if the Emperor was not behaving "more calmly", (*sedatius*), more reasonably, in short, at a time when "extraordinary prosperity" was enjoyed – Ammianus, once again, uses the repetition of ideas, syntagmas or terms (adjectives or adverbs), to highlight the intended emphasis<sup>76</sup> –, like overripe fruit<sup>77</sup>, he was to die soon in the wake of his own success. What is serious is that the ominous portent will soon be as true as it is ill-fated, and, in fact, the historian again echoes it all in the following book (23.1.3-7), in the same tone and almost identical commonplaces: the failed desire of all, even the gods, to make him give up the enterprise; the many omens ignored (the earthquake in Constantinople; the death of Felix and the *comes Iulianus*, with the inscription, and the death of the eldest priest at the temple of the *Genius*, 23.1.5); and, more definitive and specific, the order he does not obey from the Sibylline Books, which prescribed that he should abandon his idea of crossing the frontiers that year... (23.1.7). The

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<sup>74</sup> The *calumniarum... machina*, which had already started some time before (15.2.7), was about to take him to his death at the hands of that *adsentatorum coetu* (§ 8), from which he was saved at the time by Empress Eusebia. Later there will many other worse moments.

<sup>75</sup> But his efforts were undoubtedly logical: a victory in the East will be profitable for the Empire as well as for him, who would cease to be contested by his enemies.

<sup>76</sup> Now it is *inmodica rerum secundarum prosperitate* (§ 3); then *ubertate nimia... (ib.)*, finally (§ 6: *crebritate nimia*). To the other *inmodice*, cf. § 7.

<sup>77</sup> The agricultural context of this syllogism, so typically Roman, should be noted.

deuteragonists, almost always loathsome and ominous, have now furnished a great truth, to which, as in the case of Cassandra in Troy, no attention is to be paid. A pity, the historian suggests, that he had not followed such prudent and clear warnings...

Secondly, the new factors which the historian's criticisms and his contemporaries include about the Emperor, are (i) the infinite sacrifices which put an end to countless poor animals, and which were about to do so too with part of the army because the soldiers became ill because of the excessive amount of meat that they ate – a topic and passage which the words of Tacitus on the civil war (*Hist.* II 93,1<sup>78</sup>) update –. And (ii), completing the previous one and along a similar line, the ceremonies, in particular the prophetic ones, which involved great expense for the treasury... – the theme of the economy returns to the foreground, determining behaviour and reproaches –; the worst side, besides the hilarity which it could give rise to in the majority and the consequent discredit, as Ammianus now points out, the same he would continue to indicate in the moments prior to death (25.2.3-8), is that they were in vain<sup>79</sup>, because in the oracles and the entrails the truth is only found “sometimes” (*non numquam futura pandentia*, § 7). The final note, also critical of the Emperor, will be his decision to open the fountain of Castalia; a topic which enables the historian to incorporate into the atmosphere the figure of Hadrian: he, called *Graeculus*<sup>80</sup>, like Julian himself – remember the criticism of those same detractors who we saw before (17.11.1), for his excessive dedication to Greek culture (n. 80) –, projects yet another shadow on to the passage and the personality of the Emperor, stressing the negative power that the whole ends up acquiring<sup>81</sup>.

Thus, the brief passage offers the key to his proud attitude that will take him to his tomb. In reality, it is, however, a complex stage episode that, in order to achieve its end, carefully combines different elements and registers: the action (his own, of the Emperor, and of different characters), with the thoughts (his own and those of others) and characterisation

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<sup>78</sup> When the Gaulish and German soldiers arrived to Rome, a city full of people and troops, they could not tolerate the heat and, worsened by the proximity of the Tiber, suffered a great amount of losses.

<sup>79</sup> ... *oscinumque et auguriorum et ominum fides, ominum fides, si reperiri usquam posset...* (22.12.7).

<sup>80</sup> On the use of this word, generally contemptuous and the special features that it has it in fourth century eulogies, Gómez Santamaría 2010, 267-274.

<sup>81</sup> After the incidents at Daphne, Julian goes up Mount Cassius to watch the sunrise, as it has been done before by Hadrian (*HA*, H 14.3).

(personal<sup>82</sup> and that of his detractors), thus shaping an insistent response between his initial characterisation and this one, since, after the initial success, he acquired confidence in the face of Constantius' death (*in immensum elatus...* (22.2.2)<sup>83</sup>, and further on, where his pride reaches inappropriate levels (*ad ultionem praeteritorum vehementer elatus*, 22.12.1); besides taking on, as a repetitive element that anticipates the disaster, the continuous recriminations for his failing to heed the omens: the growing power of other ones will multiply the danger of the march (23.1.7), until culminating in those omens, about his death, also ignored (25.2.3-8).

In fact, it is this inappropriate arrogance which is manifested in his strange reply to those who, already at the start of the campaign, had offered him their help (23.2.1); the text, which illustrates well the idea that Rome had of itself and of its political role in the world, incorporates the change that has taken place in the sovereign, already too vain. The embassies, the omniscient narrator (Ammianus) indicates, were cordially received, but sent away without accepting their offer, because the Emperor, *speciosa fiducia*, replied to them that it was not fitting (*decere*) that Rome should resolve its affairs with the help of strangers, bearing in mind that the natural thing (*conveniret*) was that she helped with her resources friends and allies, if they were obliged to ask for such help (23.2.1)<sup>84</sup>.

However, the already obvious evidence of change is his choleric attitude to the events at Daphne, from the fire at the temple of Apollo which he attributed to the Christians (22.13). The well-known episode reveals his injustice<sup>85</sup>, through his inability to control his anger (22.13.2 and 14.2), although, later, other details increase the negative characterisation:

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<sup>82</sup> The emperor, who appears unmoved by intrigues (*frustra virum circumlatrabant immobilem...* § 4), has a stronger personality than many others (§ 5).

<sup>83</sup> Constantius' death opens his way to Constantinople and to the control of the Empire. This is also the moment when omens begin. Overwhelmed by them (this is part of his tragic fate), he rejects the omens (near his death, 25.2.3-8). He will do the same before his departure (23.1.6-7; the march on Hierapolis began the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 23.2.6). This one (22.12.1) corresponds to the Persian campaign.

<sup>84</sup> He did ask for troops to Arsaces (23.2.2).

<sup>85</sup> According Ammianus, Julian ordered an extensive inquiry to be conducted, because he suspected the Christians started the fire. The author does not give the results of the enquiry, if there ever were. He subtly mentions the rumours concerning the responsibility of Asclepius, a philosopher who had visited the emperor.

his meagre political skill on attempting, out of a simple desire for popularity (*popularitatis amore*), to lower the price of luxury goods (22.14.1); and that despite the fact that the Senate of Antioch had tried to make him see the error that his decision involved; his obstinacy, not accepting to reason (§ 2), drawing a comparison with his brother Gallus which does not reflect well on him. It is true that Ammianus sets aside his lesser cruelty, but in his anger at the Antiochans it shows: *saeviens ut obtretractores et contumaces*. Then, the details seem to heighten the negative impression: hate towards this city is recorded in his work (*Misopogon*), enumerating with hostility (*infensa mente*) the sins of its inhabitants, and, what is worse in an Emperor and a philosopher, his manifest tendentiousness (*addensque veritati conplura*). The final consequence, to be obliged to conceal the anger he felt about all the comments and jokes made against him, he returns to the topic that had started his change: he feels something inside himself which is not positive – there, longing for triumphs; here, anger –, and outside himself he must conceal it (*coactus dissimulare pro tempore, ira sufflabatur interna*); which leads to clear hypocrisy. Then, on leaving the city, the latter (*ira*) will become explicit in the threat he shouts about never setting foot in it again; except the utterance will be a further omen against him, because, indeed, he will not enter it again. The supreme irony is that the solemn rites that, meanwhile, undaunted (*tacens tamen motumque in animi retinens*), he had continued carrying out (22.14.3), were not going to do anything for him; he seeks to bring something about (25.2) which he himself did not want, or knows how to avoid: the Etruscan soothsayers called in a hurry are no use to him because he pays no heed to them (25.2.7-8<sup>86</sup>); or, deep down, has not been able to: that is the tragedy, as the sad departure of the Genius from his tent, on the eve of his death (25.2.3) illustrates.

Ammianus, therefore, uses the theme subtly, from a structural and dramatic point of view, obviating, albeit not forgetting, the simplest and most evident elements of adornment by which the area is characterised. An alternative example, totally *sensu contrario*, of this procedure in which the Orient plays a principal role in the personal and political change in the Emperor, and including a development of the account which, linearly and dramatically, leads to its end (that of a life and of a process), is the treatment provided by *Historia Augusta* of the commonplace of the figure

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<sup>86</sup> The Tarquitian books forbade generals from beginning a battle when a falling star had been seen. The emperor ignores this warning.



of Elagabalus; an Emperor whose life reflects the perfect tenor of what could be considered the (ill-fated) influence of oriental *luxuria* in Rome. Here the passage is contrary to that of Julian: the youth comes from the Orient, amid the senators' great expectations (3.2-3); until he enters the City, introducing his god (3.4), and holds the first meeting with the Senate, with his mother and his *senaculum* (4.3)<sup>87</sup>, and so puts an end to the positive expectations that had been placed upon him. His life, 'perfect' antithesis of that of his cousin, Alexander Severus, who as *bonus* (and *severus*) *imperator*<sup>88</sup>, repudiated "external adornment", is one of the most evocative and descriptive of the collection, above all on the staging: furniture, clothes, postures,...; and he, a perfect model of the oriental despot, without education; an 'exhibitionist'<sup>89</sup> – in the sense of "pretentiously showing off his own possessions": for a whole summer he devoted himself to organizing festivities and banquets every day decked with different colours<sup>90</sup> –, who includes in his personal adornment and properties the most evident digest of Asian wealth in the historiography of the epoch: gold (on counterpanes and tunics; these also of purple, or Persicae<sup>91</sup>); jewellery and gems, in all their applications: in footwear, in a typical forerunner to what later A. Victor, and Eutropius were to attribute to Diocletian, as we saw; in the pearl broaches; in a sword belt set with fine stones<sup>92</sup>; in carriages, scorning those of silver, ivory or bronze...; and the diadem encrusted with precious stones (23.5), whose use was due to the desire to acquire greater beauty and be similar to a woman (a commonplace which coincides with that of his overflowing sexuality). Additionally, he also repeats traditional schema: he walked around naked, being dragged off by women equally naked. In this simplification of some

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<sup>87</sup> Straub 1966, 221-240

<sup>88</sup> Moreno 1999, 191-216

<sup>89</sup> One of the most frequent (and well defining) terms used is *exhibuit/exhiberet* (19.1 bis).

<sup>90</sup> The colors were green, sea green, blue, etc. They keep on changing tones and shades until the summer begins.

<sup>91</sup> The weight of this tunic, full of gemstones, is similar to the weight of "pleasure": *cum gravari se diceret onere voluptatis* (23.3). On another passage (26.1), it is said that he was the first emperor to wear silk dresses. The dalmatic, like for Commodus (8.8), is a feminine feature.

<sup>92</sup> A similar, topical description is applied to Gallienus (16.4). There is an interesting innovation: the emperor wears gold in his hair, to make it shinier (§ 3).

of these adornments of the orientalized Emperor<sup>93</sup>, the result is clear: Elagabalus did not dress as a woman, like Commodus; ‘he was’ a woman, with the same aesthetic weaknesses, like Zenobia.

In fact, the characterisation of the queen of Palmyra completes the image that is attributed to an oriental queen (*HA*, TT 30): an echo or copy of Cleopatra, whose goblets of gold with precious stones used at banquets<sup>94</sup>, and Dido, are adorned with all the intellectual virtues attributed to the latter; and, also, with all the rich Asian jewellery – evidently, with the diadem and mantle (§ 2) – which the artistic representations illustrate: even her teeth were so white that many believed they were “pearls” (*margaritas...*). Her figure, as it is described and used – as an authentic warrior, although besides the helmet she wears countless jewels (§ 14) – it is the moralising antithesis of Gallienus (*Omnis iam consumptus est pudor*) and people from the barbarous and western Victoria (TT 31), but filtered, depending on the commonplaces, not only by the necessity of contrast that the moment requires, but also by the characterisation of the emperors involved (Aurelian too), and the obligation of maintaining the rhetorical *delectare*, with all the possible commonplaces. With these elements, it is logical that life should swing in its composition between the luxurious and wealthy habits of the Orient – how she held her banquets: *regum more Persarum convivata est*; and, in reality, it is what she gained: *vixit regali pomp<a> –*; and the *severitas* of a tyrant, the clemency of a *bonus princeps*, and a skill for administering the exchequer, “far above what is usual in women...”, when it was necessary (TT 30.16), to set her against the two Emperors involved, above all to the *crudelitas* of Aurelian. But the picture, although generally well-balanced – if she hunted with ‘Hispanic’ passion (7 18), she also allowed herself to be accompanied by eunuchs, instead of ladies-in-waiting, albeit old ones...; she used a *carpentum*, not a *pilentum*, which automatically puts her in the military sphere, taking her out of the purely feminine bounds – as Quintus Curtius notes in the case of Darius, the cart is the national custom (V 10.12), the irony in his case being that his assassins later put him in a covered wagon (V 12.16) –; and if she did not ride a horse she walked with her soldiers 3 or 4 miles; she drank with the

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<sup>93</sup> He is a heavy drinker (21.6; cf. 23.1), which reminds of Alexander the Great. This cliché is also applied to Gallienus, who, according Ammianus, had never drunk two cups of the same wine at a feast (17.4).

<sup>94</sup> Zenobia traced her lineage to Cleopatra (30.2) and, surprisingly, she spoke Egyptian *ad perfectum modum* (30.21).

generals, etc. so she ended up opting for an oriental sphere. In fact, from the official, more political angle, she knew how to combine the feminine touch with the theatricality of power and mythical epic: but if in assemblies she wore a helmet, she also wore a belt from which precious stones hung and a diamond broach; one of her shoulders, the biographer does not say which, was bare; and she knew the history of Alexander and the Orient so well, that, so it is said, she had written an epitome about it; and, of course, as it was intended: *more magis Persico adorata est...* Of course, in rightful compensation, in her triumph in Rome, despite her valour on campaign, she was taken bound in golden chains, the handcuffs and neck shackles were of gold too and the jewels she dragged prevented her from walking because of their weight... (30.25-7)<sup>95</sup>.

Compared to this catalogue of rich galas which the anonymous author of the HA draws up in these two paradigmatic lives, a commonplace synthesis of Asian luxury and everything that its enjoyment involves, Ammianus does not speak at length about the most obvious, albeit he does not silently pass over the wealth of the area, which even Julian uses as an argument to convince his men, irritated by the small amount of the reward he has allocated them (24.3.5), of the advantages which triumph will bring them. In a clear evocation of Hannibal's harangue to Italy and the advantages he could offer them, the Emperor suggests to them – he does not promise – the possibility of such wealth passing down into their hands; sadly, he justifies himself, if Rome lacks gold it is because he has used it to buy the barbarians wishes...

Deep down, this is the most important, albeit not always perceptible, aspect of the topic: the substantial contrast that is established between the behaviour of the enemy of the West —the barbarian, gesticulating and riotous, who suddenly becomes calm, as in the interview between Valentinian and Macrian (30.3); and as in Strasbourg—; and that of the Orient: the Persian, formalist in the embassies (as in that of Shapur and Valens, 30.2), multitudinous in the entourage; peremptory in threats —Shapur becomes unduly angry, from his posture of superiority, and ends up resolving with torture and clashes a situation which Valens lost control of; and the latter, hesitant and irresolute, has to let go unpunished because Gothic threat appears (30.2.8)—; and ostentatious in his bearing and his adornment; a duality that Constantius II embodies perfectly in his entrance

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<sup>95</sup> The antithetical conclusion of her story—as in the case of the exuberant Eastern elephants defeated by the humble, old-fashioned Roman horses— is that she lived the rest of her life *cum liberis matronae iam more Romanae...* (§ 27).

to Rome (solemnity and brilliance), and the last Emperors polarize: widespread cruelty and growing anger, up to death and disaster. Thus the traditional parameter is maintained which from centuries earlier has dogged the imagination and the pen of classical historiography, as the author of Constantius' panegyric (12 [IX Oxf] 24.1) summarizes: *Facile est uincere timidos et imbelles, quales amoena Graeciae et deliciae Orientis educunt, uix leue pallium et sericos sinus uitando sole tolerantes et, si quando in periculum uenerint, libertatis immemores, ut seruire liceat orantes. Romanum uero militem, quem qualemque ordinat disciplina et sacramenti religio confirmat, aut trucem Francorum ferina sola carne distentum, qui vitam pro uictus sui utilitate contemnat, quantae moles sit superare uel capere!* What is not always easy is to find the specific literary usage, the formulas and forms which, of such *deliciae Orientis*, Roman historians have made use of...

# CENTRING CONSTANTINOPE IN HIMERIOS' *ORATIO* 41

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## 1. Introduction

Simon Swain once admitted that “understanding the social and political function of Greek rhetoric in the fourth century is not as easy as it might seem”<sup>1</sup>. According to Swain, rhetors of what is sometimes called the Third Sophistic (a controversial term<sup>2</sup>, not used by him) might have been looking back towards the literary tradition of the Second Sophistic, but they were operating in a world that had changed profoundly, a society that was becoming increasingly stratified, and thus commanded a heightened use of the rhetoric of praise: of description, encomium, and panegyric<sup>3</sup>. Himerios' *Oratio* 41 is just such an example of the epideictic, encomiastic mode in oratory, so typical of the fourth century: it is, formally, a speech of arrival, an ἐπιβατήριος λόγος, delivered by Himerios in Constantinople during Julian's stay there from December 361 until June 362<sup>4</sup>. The oration, in fact, has a double encomiastic function, in that it aims to praise both the city and the emperor Julian, who had summoned Himerios to his court.

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<sup>1</sup> Swain 2004, 355. On panegyric and the panegyric mode as a difficult subject cf. Cameron 2006, 20-23.

<sup>2</sup> The term “Third Sophistic” was coined by Pernot 1993, 14, n. 9 – repeated also in *idem*. 2000, 271-2. In his most recent contribution on the topic, Pernot argues for continuity and similarity between the Second and Third Sophistic – see *idem*. 2006-2007. For recent discussions on the usefulness of this term see Quiroga 2007, and (more critically) van Hoof 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See Swain 2004, 362-3.

<sup>4</sup> For the importance of this oration in establishing some datable events in Himerios' life see Barnes 1987, 207-9. On whether Julian himself was present or not when Himerios delivered his speech see Penella 2007, 35.

Who was Himerios and why was he invited to join Julian in Constantinople? Himerios, like Julian, was a pagan, and, as he says at the beginning of this oration, he had been recently initiated in the rites of Mithras, which Julian himself had established in Constantinople<sup>5</sup>; so, his religious inclinations must have been at least one factor in Julian's approval of him. Apart from that, Himerios was a distinguished orator and teacher of rhetoric in fourth-century Athens, where he had gone to study as a young man, leaving his hometown, Bithynian Prusias. Alongside Libanios (in Antioch) and Themistios (in Constantinople), Himerios is one of the most important sophists of his time and a prominent figure in the revival of rhetoric in the fourth century. But, whereas Libanios and Themistios are increasingly becoming the focus of serious study<sup>6</sup>, Himerios does not seem to share their fortune. There are many possible explanations for this. One is the fragmentary state of part of his work (although a significant number of orations survive in full). Another is that modern criticism, following in the footsteps of ancient critics, tends to see Themistios and Libanios as "Atticists" (proponents of the simple, serious, and "manly" style)<sup>7</sup>, while Himerios can be assigned to the Asiatic trend, which, in ancient as well as modern times, has been associated with the degeneration of classical style and tradition. Himerios' use of poetic diction and rhythm, word-play, *pathos*, and flamboyant metaphor led Eduard Norden to characterise his work as "Poesie in scheinbarer Prosa" (poetry in what only seems to be prose)<sup>8</sup>. In his recent reappraisal of Norden's judgement, Völker has reinstated, with some added nuance, Himerios' "starke Betonung des Poetischen"<sup>9</sup>, albeit noting briefly that

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<sup>5</sup> See *Or.* 41.1, with Penella's note *ad loc.* (2007, 59, n. 64).

<sup>6</sup> For just two examples see Vanderspoel 1995 on Themistios, and Criboire 2007 and ead. 2013 on Libanios.

<sup>7</sup> Libanios was even criticised by Eunapios (who wrote his *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* in 396) for his excessive Atticism. Swain 2004, 378, quotes the passage in question (Eunapios, *Vitae phil. et soph.* 496).

<sup>8</sup> Norden 1974, 429. On Himerios' style in general cf. Kennedy 1983, 143-8, Völker 2003, 50-3, Penella 2007, 14-16, and Criboire 2007, 54-8 and 168-9 – for Criboire, Himerios is the "singing sophist" (54). Innes-Winterbottom 1988, 7-8 define the main characteristics of the Asian style as: concinnity, word-play, bombast, *pathos*, and rhythm, all of which can clearly be found in Himerios' oratory.

<sup>9</sup> Völker 2006, 609.

influence from poetry is common in many Greek rhetors at least since the Second Sophistic<sup>10</sup>.

The objective of this article is precisely to examine the possibility that the gap between the Second Sophistic and later Greek rhetoric was not as great as it is sometimes assumed. Lieve van Hoof has recently called for abandoning the term “Third Sophistic” and looking at these Late Antique works “through the lens of the Second Sophistic”<sup>11</sup>. My argument is that at least some of the methodologies now frequently employed for the exploration of issues of culture and identity in the Second Sophistic can usefully be applied to the highly poetic speeches of Himerios as well: his *Oratio* 41 is taken here as a case study, which will suggest, through a series of close readings, that later Greek rhetoric can still play a significant role in political and social life, in spite of (or even through) its high degree of allusiveness, its obsession with the past, and its “eminently predictable form”<sup>12</sup>. These very same characteristics have been reclaimed and re-contextualised for the Second Sophistic, whose literature is now analysed as a compelling site for the performance of political and cultural self-definition<sup>13</sup>.

Unlike their predecessors of the Second Sophistic, the rhetors of later Antiquity are commonly perceived as frightened by, and alienated from, the new world they live in – they supposedly spend more time teaching than performing; they are more “university professors” and less “political or social agents”<sup>14</sup>. As van Hoof says, even if it is true that Late Antique sophists devoted more time and effort to their teaching activities, this does not necessarily detract from their socio-political standing<sup>15</sup> – many of these sophists were, in fact, admired by emperors, had careers in politics, and exerted their influence on behalf of their local communities<sup>16</sup>. What is more, it is often clear from their own words that, just like the deuterosophists, their socio-political prestige depended to a great extent on their performance of *paideia* and the public self-promotion of their literary

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 590.

<sup>11</sup> van Hoof 2010, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Brown 1992, 42, who goes on to claim “the formalized speech of the upper classes was not designed to express sudden challenges and novel sentiments.”

<sup>13</sup> For just one example of this approach see Whitmarsh 2001.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Malosse-Schouler 2009, 163-4.

<sup>15</sup> See van Hoof 2010, 218.

<sup>16</sup> For the example of Libanios as “the local intellectual [...] looking after local interests” see Swain 2004, 393; on Prohaeresios’ successful attempts to improve the corn supply of Athens see Kennedy 1983, 139-141.

sophistication. Himerios' self-fashioning as a *pepaideuomenos* and the agonistic display of his literary abilities will be highlighted in my analysis of his *Oratio* 41; his accomplishment of rhetorical virtuosity will be shown to have important consequences not only for the rhetor's own self-promotion, but also for the construction of an elite, Greek identity, to which his audience would (or should) aspire.

## 2. Constantinople as the new Athens

Himerios might not be considered an Atticist (at least not stylistically), but he is obsessed with Athens and its cultural heritage. *Paideia* (in its double meaning of “culture” and “education”), and its close link to Athens and Athenian literature, is central in his own self-definition, just as it was for his predecessors of the Second Sophistic. It is not surprising, then, that one of the foremost strategies he employs in his praise of Constantinople, as the new world capital, is to associate it with Athens:

τοιγαροῦν παρ' ὑμῖν φιλοσοφία ἢ μὲν ὀθνεῖος, ἢ δὲ ἐγγώριος πάση τῇ φιληκοῖα τῆς πόλεως ὥσπερ τις ἀγαθὴ μέλιττα ἐξ ἀκηράτων λειμώνων κηρία πλάττουσα πᾶσαν ἐπιβόσκειται αὐτήν, νῦν μὲν ἐμβομβοῦσα θεάτροις καὶ τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν καὶ τὸν Ἀρίστωνος δι' ἑαυτῆς ὑμῖν συνάπτουσα. (Or. 41.12)<sup>17</sup>

Consequently – and given that the whole city is so attentive to it – philosophy dwells among you, both foreign-born and native philosophy. Like a good bee from undefiled meadows making honey, it feeds on the whole city. Now it buzzes in the theatres and through its personal efforts unites you to the Academy and to Ariston's son [Plato].

The efforts of Constantinopolitan philosophers (and here we might have a reference to Themistios, the most important Constantinopolitan philosopher of the time) unite the new capital to the ancient seat of philosophical learning. What is significant here is that Himerios' bee is Attic on more levels than just the linguistic one (μέλιττα and not μέλισσα): the phrase μέλιττα ἐξ ἀκηράτων λειμώνων is a direct allusion to Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where we hear, in Hippolytus' first speech, that “a spring-time bee makes its way through an undefiled meadow”, ἀκήρατον /μέλισσα

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<sup>17</sup> For the text of Himerios I am using the edition by Colonna 1952. The English translation is that of Penella 2007.



λειμῶν' ἠρινὴ διέρχεται (vv. 76-7)<sup>18</sup>. It is probably not a coincidence that Himerios is alluding here to an eminently Attic play (Attic, in that it is the work of an Athenian author, but also in that it is set in Attica), and indeed a play which is largely about purity and eclecticism. At the same time as it is an exceedingly classical image, the representation of philosophy or philosophers as a hard-working bee also resonates with the image of the ideal Late Antique author or reader who works just as hard as a bee, selecting the appropriate models from a vast tradition, which must have been difficult to control, especially in its moral implications<sup>19</sup>.

Himerios' Attic bee shows us how Athens maintains its position as the "mother of learning"<sup>20</sup>, which Constantinople is now emulating with its own philosophers. Himerios himself is, in fact, a kind of personification of Athenian learning, coming to Constantinople to "spread the seed" of *paideia*:

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἔδει τούτους [τοὺς λόγους] μετὰ τοὺς Ἀττικοὺς ἄθλους καὶ τὰ τῆς Παρθένου μεγάλα στέμματα, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην γῆν ἐξ Ἀττικῆς λόγων ἀρῶσαι σπέρμασιν, οὐκ ἐπὶ Ῥῆνον ἦγεν ἐσπέριον, οὐδ' ἐπὶ τὴν Ὠκεανοῦ μυθώδη θάλασσαν καὶ τούτοις τὴν ἀποδημίαν ἐπόρθμευσεν, ἀλλ' ἔτι μὲν ἠβῶντας καὶ ἰούλω πρώτῳ χλοάζοντας παρ' ὑμᾶς ἤγαγεν, ἵνα ἀπαλοῖς ἐτι τοῖς κάλυξιν ὕμνον τῇ πόλει συμπλέξωσιν. (*Or.* 41.2)

When this learning of mine, after enduring Attic contests and winning the great garlands of the virgin goddess [Athena], had to leave Attica and sow the rest of the earth with the seeds of learning it got there, fate did not take it to the Rhine in the West, nor did it carry it to the fabulous waters of the Ocean. No, fate brought it, while still in its prime and sprouting its first beard, to you, so that it might plait together a hymn for the city from still tender buds.

<sup>18</sup> Neither Völker 2003 nor Penella 2007 picks up on this allusion. It also goes unnoticed in the two most extensive overviews of Himerios' poetic references: Rizzo 1898, and Cuffari 1983 – the latter's section on "citations from drama" (pp. 94-9) only includes Menander and some anonymous works.

<sup>19</sup> For an example of the Late Antique author working like a bee see Macrobius' *Saturnalia* 1, Preface 5. For the reader as a bee see Basil of Caesarea's address "To young men, on how they might derive profit from pagan literature" 4.7-8; an earlier precedent of Basil's ideas can be found in Plutarch's "On how a young man should study poems"; *Moralia* 14.12.

<sup>20</sup> For how Late Antique rhetors considered Athens their spiritual home and strove to attach Constantinople and Thessalonice to Athens see Stenger 2009, 36-45.

Himerios is referring here to an earlier oration (probably *Or.* 62), which he had delivered in Constantinople when he was a young man. He imagines himself at the time as Triptolemos, a mythological young hero from Eleusina who was instructed in the art of agriculture by Demeter, and was given a winged chariot drawn by serpents, from which he scattered grain-seed throughout the earth, departing, of course, from Attica. Himerios' insistence that he did not take his learning to the West is, in all probability, a reference to his rival at Athens, Prohaeresios, who visited the emperor Constans in Gaul<sup>21</sup>. Upon Prohaeresios' request, Constans granted some islands to Athens, to secure its grain supply, and when the prefect of Illyricum confirmed the gift, Prohaeresios delivered a speech before him, in which he introduced the myth of Triptolemos and his gift of grain to humankind<sup>22</sup>. If his rival becomes, through his emperor's benefaction, a new Triptolemos, who brings literal grain, Himerios outdoes him by becoming, through mythological allusion, the cultural Triptolemos, who spreads the seed of *paideia*. The image of the travelling rhetor as another Triptolemos might, in fact, have come to Himerios from an author of the Second Sophistic. Lucian, in his supposedly autobiographic *Somnium*, describes a dream in which he chooses, while still an adolescent, Rhetoric over Sculpture as his profession, and where the personified Rhetoric takes the young Lucian up on a flying chariot; the author claims that he feels like a new Triptolemos spreading some kind of seed, although, he says ironically, he cannot remember what that seed was<sup>23</sup>. The audience, of course, understands that what Lucian is spreading is learning and culture

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<sup>21</sup> For the history of the detection of this allusion, see Barnes 1983, 208-9, who also puts forward the suggestion that Himerios' reference to the "waters of the Ocean" alludes to Constans' expedition to Britain in 342/3 – "an obvious and easy theme for any who wished to praise or flatter him". Cf. Penella 2007, 60, n. 65. On the relationship between Himerios and Prohaeresios, and Eunapios' interest in it, see further Penella 1990, 98-9.

<sup>22</sup> The story is reported in Eunapios, *Vitae phil. et soph.* 492: [Prohaeresios] "cited Keleos and Triptolemos and how Demeter sojourned among men that she might bestow on them the gift of corn. With that famous narrative he combined the tale of the generosity of Constans, and very speedily he invested the occurrence with the splendour and dignity of ancient legend." (Translation in Kennedy 1983, 141).

<sup>23</sup> Lucian, *Somn.* 15: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀνῆλθον, ἡ μὲν ἤλαυνε καὶ ὑψηνιόχει, ἀρθεις δὲ εἰς ὕψος ἐγὼ ἐπεσκόπουν ἀπὸ τῆς ἕω ἀρξάμενος ἄχρι πρὸς τὰ ἐσπέρια πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη καὶ δήμους, καθάπερ ὁ Τριπτόλεμος ἀποσπεύρων τι εἰς τὴν γῆν. οὐκέτι μέντοι μέμνημαι ὅ τι τὸ σπειρόμενον ἐκεῖνο ἦν, πλὴν τοῦτο μόνον ὅτι κάτωθεν ἀφορῶντες ἄνθρωποι ἐπήνουν καὶ μετ' εὐφημίας καθ' οὓς γενοίμην τῇ πτήσει παρέπεμπον.

through his works. The only possible verbal allusion here is between Himerios' ἐπὶ Ῥῆνον ἦγεν ἐσπέριον and Lucian's ἄχρι πρὸς τὰ ἐσπέρια, but it is not necessarily enough to convince us that Himerios has in mind the Lucianic passage in its specific wording. No other author, however, refers to Triptolemos in connection with the spreading of learning, so it is not out of the question that Himerios is influenced by the Lucianic work, and makes explicit what Lucian leaves ironically implicit: that the sophist is the Triptolemos of literary culture, someone who is spatially superior to his audience (flying up in his winged chariot), and who, in Himerios' case, will bring knowledge from the privileged and central place he comes from to the faraway lands he visits.

In this passage as well, Athens remains the place from which learning emanates. Constantinople, however, is singled out as the selected destination, the spiritual child of Athens. In the same paragraph, Himerios calls himself an "Attic Muse", and says that Athens is addressing its own progeny (Ἀθῆναι τὰς αὐτῶν ὠδῖνας προσφθέγγονται) – Constantinople, itself is portrayed as the city that gave birth to Julian and allowed the Muses to be the midwives of his character (ταῦτά τοι καὶ βασιλέως τύχην ἔνθεον ὠδίνειν μέλλουσα, Μούσαις ἐπέτρεψε τὴν τοῦτου φύσιν **μειεύεσθαι**). This is one of many passages in this oration where we find the imagery and vocabulary of childbirth and nursing – others will be examined later on. So, here, Athens is the mother-city of Constantinople, and Constantinople is the mother of Julian. Himerios relies on the tradition that made Byzantium a colony of Athens<sup>24</sup>, but he does not leave it at that. He goes on to create a competition between the metropolis and its colony: using what is a common *topos* in panegyrics on cities, he attempts to show that, in some ways, Constantinople is superior to the city to which it is advantageously attached<sup>25</sup>.

What is striking here is that the competition element is expressed through Julian (it is because of him that Constantinople can vie with Athens), who is said to be superior to Kekrops, the legendary first king of Athens: both of them are imagined as children, but also "founding" figures of their respective cities:

ὃ τὸν ἐλεύθερον πυρσὸν ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν ἀνάμιασα· ὃ τὰς εὐτυχεῖς ὠδῖνας καὶ κυησαμένη καὶ λύσσασα· ὃ κρεῖττονα τόκον καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς μητροπόλεως φήνασα· τῆς μὲν γὰρ ὁ Κέκροψ τὸ πρῶτον βλάβστημα—οὐπω καθαρὸς ὁ Κέκροψ ἀνθρώπος, ὅτε τὰς ἐκ λαγόνων σπείρας τῆς μητρὸς εἶχεν, οὐπω τὴν

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Amm. Marc. 22.8.8: *Constantinopolis, vetus Byzantium, Atticorum colonia*.

<sup>25</sup> See Penella 2007, 37.

γλώτταν Ἀττικὰ φθειγγομένην—τὸ σὸν δὲ ἄρα ἕκ τινος φύσεως ἀκράτου συγκείμενον· τύχης γὰρ δήπου καὶ ἀρετῆς ἀκρας ἡ σὺνοδος. (*Or.* 41.3)

O city that lit the torch of freedom for all humankind! O city that conceived and brought forth a fortunate infant! O city that brought into the light a child who was even better than one whom your mother-city itself brought forth! For the first offspring of your mother-city was Kekrops. He was not yet a genuine human being, since from the waist down, he had his mother's [serpentine] coils, and he did not yet speak Attic Greek. But your offspring, of course, has an unmixed nature. In him there is a conjunction of the highest good fortune and the highest virtue.

The vocabulary of pregnancy and childbirth is used repeatedly to speak about the personified city that, as a woman, conceives, carries, and brings forth the “fortunate infant”, Julian. Kekrops, the offspring of Athens, on the other hand, is not born of a woman, but springs from the earth (βλάστημα), and, therefore, has serpentine coils and cannot yet speak Attic Greek. The idea behind the comparison seems bizarre, but it is not unique in late Greek literature. In the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnos, a fifth-century epic, the poet praises Beirut by saying that its first inhabitants, who were autochthonous (like the first inhabitants of Athens), were perfectly formed, unlike Kekrops, who was an incomplete human, and scratched the earth with his snaky feet<sup>26</sup>. Again, there is no evidence to support the case for a direct allusion here; Nonnos might or might not have read Himerios; both authors could, in fact, be following the same rhetorical handbook. What we *can* say, at the very least, is that both Himerios and Nonnos, as it is typical for Late Antique intellectuals, are in a metaphorical frame of mind<sup>27</sup>: for them, everything needs to be compared to something (preferably ancient), and needs to have a precedent, and, then, within any given analogy the points of contact can multiply and proliferate, so that if Constantinople is a new and improved Athens, Julian must be a new and improved Kekrops.

Another figure (and a more “obvious” one) to whom Julian is compared is the Sun in his different manifestations, primarily as Mithra,

<sup>26</sup> See Nonnos, *Dion.* 41.59-64: Κέκροπος οὐ τύπον εἶχον, ὃς ἰοβόλω ποδὸς ὀλκῶ / γαῖαν ἐπιξύων ὀφιώδεϊ σύρετο ταρσῶ, / νέρθε δράκων, καὶ ὑπερθεν ἀπ' ἰξύος ἄχρι καρῆνου / ἄλλοφυῆς ἀτέλεστος ἐφαίνετο δίχροος ἀνήρ· / οὐ τύπον ἄγριον εἶχον Ἐρεχθέος, ὃν τέκε γαίης / αὐλακι νυμφεύσας γαμῖην Ἴφαιστος ἐέρσην. For Nonnos' Beirut and its superiority to Athens see Hadjittofi 2007, 377.

<sup>27</sup> For this metaphorical “habit” in late antiquity see, for example, Hansen 2003, 197-257.

but also as Apollo. In paragraph 8 Julian is said to have “washed away the darkness that was preventing us from lifting our heads up to the Sun and has thereby given us the gift of raising us up to the heaven as if from some Tartaros or lightless life”<sup>28</sup>. Himerios goes on to say that Julian has healed the city from disease, and he has done that with immediate effect, unlike those who heal the sick with human skills. “After all, one would expect someone who links his nature with the Sun (ἡλίῳ φύσιν συνάπτοντα) both to give light and to reveal a better life”. The Sun and Mithra are both important in Julian’s religiosity (even if their role is sometimes exaggerated in modern scholarship<sup>29</sup>), and in fact this oration started with Himerios saying that he has recently been initiated into the rites of Mithra, a fact which brings him even closer to Julian. In this paragraph, Julian is presented as a Mithra- or Sun-figure, who brings light to a city plunged in the darkness of Christianity, and then morphs into Apollo – the healer, who restores the city’s health<sup>30</sup>. The motif of illumination is recurrent throughout the oration (indeed, this very paragraph opened with Julian himself compared to a jewel which “shines on the city’s splendour more brightly than any gold”<sup>31</sup>), and I will come back to it in the last section of this paper.

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<sup>28</sup> *Or.* 41.8: αὐτὸς τὸν καλύοντα ζόφον ἀνατείνειν χεῖρας εἰς Ἥλιον ἀρετῆ καθήρας εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀναπέμπειν οἶον ἐκ ταρτάρου τινὸς καὶ ἀλαμποῦς βίου δεδωρηται. Prudentius gives the same image a Christian turn, when he presents the city (in his case, Rome) thrust into darkness and pollution but then set on the right path by an emperor, Theodosios, who is determined to drive away paganism; see *C. Symm.* 1.412-26.

<sup>29</sup> See Penella 2007, 59, n. 64 with further bibliography.

<sup>30</sup> Barnes 1987, 206 and 222 points out that this and the following paragraphs (41.8-15) indicate Constantinople had an exclusively Christian character prior to Julian’s introduction of pagan cults. Penella 2007, 62, n. 69 raises the possibility, which, however, he does not favour, that Himerios’ τελετὰς δὲ θείας καθιδρύνον τῆ πόλει ξένας (“he has established religious rites from abroad in the city”) suggests these pagan rites were essentially “alien” to the character of the city. It is true, however, that Himerios nowhere implies that Julian’s innovations constitute a “return” to the old ways, which he could conceivably have suggested, since Constantine himself was an initiate in the Mithraic rites, and continued to show his loyalty to the Sun god even after his conversion – see Alföldi 1948, 56-8.

<sup>31</sup> *Or.* 41.8: παντὸς μὲν χρυσοῦ φανότερος περιλάμπει τὴν ἀγλαίαν τῆς πόλεως. In paragraph 3, quoted above, it is the personified city that lights up “the torch of freedom for all humankind”, τὸν ἐλεύθερον πυρσὸν ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν ἀνάμμασα. Because of Himerios’ predilection for the motif of fire, Criboire 2007, 168 calls him “Himerios the pyrotechnician”.

However, returning to the issue of Constantinople's centrality, there is one further passage in which the new capital enters into a competition with another "iconic" Hellenic location: Delos (in paragraph 4). The motif of childbirth is also present here: Delos had the honour of being Apollo's place of birth (λαχοῦσαν τὰς θείας ὠδῖνας Ἀπόλλωνος), and, although it is a small island, it has become the subject of poems and songs. Constantinople should be praised by everybody, in poetry as well as in prose, Himerios says, because of its size, beauty, and geographical location. Even though it is not made explicit by Himerios, the fact that Julian, who is a manifestation of Apollo, as we have just seen, was born in Constantinople also helps this new city to appropriate (at least some) of the cultural capital and prestige of the ancient Greek core<sup>32</sup>. In Himerios' new "imaginary geography", Constantinople can supplant the central position of the (once) central island of the Cyclades, while at the same time being on the edge (or at the beginning and at the end, as Himerios says) of two continents<sup>33</sup>.

### 3. Describing Constantinople

There are two passages in this oration where Himerios speaks about Constantinople's geography. The first is the one just mentioned, where Constantinople is favourably compared to Delos, and where we hear that this city marks the beginning and end of both Europe and Asia, and enjoys the waters of the Black Sea, the Bosphoros, and the Aegean. The second one is far more perplexing:

ἀρξάμενη γὰρ ἐκ μέσων μικροῦ τῶν τοῦ πορθμοῦ κυμάτων ποτίζεσθαι, πολὺν τινα δρόμον τὸ πρὸς ἐσπέραν ἐξέδραμε, μεγάλην ποιούσα πόλιν τὸ τῆς ἡπείρου δεχόμενον· κενὸν δὲ ἀφῆκε πόλεως οὐδ' ὅσον εἰς λαγόνας καὶ τὴν κύκλῳ περιπτύσσουσιν νῆσον ἅπασαν μερίζεται, ἀλλ' ἐπισχεθεῖσα μὲν πᾶσιν αἰγιαλοῖς καὶ πᾶσι πεδίοις, ἡπειρώσασα δὲ καὶ αὐτὴν ἤδη τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ βιασαμένη μερίδα γενέσθαι πόλεως, σαλεύουσιν φύσιν καὶ ἄστατον πεπηγένην πεποίηκεν. (*Or.* 41.6)

This city begins to be bathed by the waters that are almost halfway across the straits. It extended itself quite a distance to the west, making a great

<sup>32</sup> For a similar process of reconfiguring the symbolic map of the eastern Roman Empire in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* see Hadjittofi 2011.

<sup>33</sup> *Or.* 41.4: σὺ μὲν γὰρ Εὐρώπης ἀρχή, σὺ δὲ καὶ πέρας καθέσθησας· σὺ δὲ καὶ Ἀσίας τὴν ἴσην μοῖραν κεκλήρωσαι.

city out of the mainland that welcomed it and leaving not even its crannies vacant nor the <shoreline> that circumscribes <the> whole peninsula. Once spread out over the whole shoreline and all the plains, it then actually turned the sea itself into part of the mainland and forced it to become part of the city; it has turned what by its nature is rolling and constantly on the move [the sea] into something immobile.

As Penella says, the part of the sentence which speaks of a peninsula circumscribed by something must be corrupt; he proposes that the words *παράλιον τήν* have fallen out after *περιπτύσσουσαν*, but even so, this sentence is difficult to understand<sup>34</sup>. The general sense of the passage seems to be that Constantinople is a big city that completely took over the natural landscape in which it was constructed, and ended up turning part of the sea into land<sup>35</sup>. This last point is definitely the most interesting and the one that stylistically stands out, not only because of the alliteration in *πεπηγέναι πεποιήκεν*, but also because of the double trochee in this phrase - the double trochee being characteristic of Asian rhythm<sup>36</sup>:

—    —    —    —    —    —    —    —    —    —  
 ὄστατον πεπηγέναι πεποιήκεν

At the same time, Himerios' description here implies a similar appreciation of paradoxical depictions of cities or other landscapes that we find in some texts from the Second Sophistic. The novel by Achilles Tatios, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, for example, reveals a predilection for landscapes where the same two elements, water and earth, intermingle<sup>37</sup>. Achilles' description of Tyre (2.14.3) comes quite close to Himerios' Constantinople: the city is, in fact, an island, joined to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, which forms a kind of neck (*τράχηλος*)<sup>38</sup>; the water flows underneath it, "so that it presents a curious spectacle: a city in the

<sup>34</sup> See Penella 2007, 62, n. 68.

<sup>35</sup> Penella (*ibid.*) refers to two other texts that describe this "invasion" of the sea by the land in Constantinople: Zos. 2.35.2, and Sidon. Apoll. *Carm.* 2.57-8. Both of these texts describe the city extending its shores, when the walls of Constantine were no longer able to contain its growing population.

<sup>36</sup> See Innes-Winterbottom 1988, 8.

<sup>37</sup> See Guez 2005, and Giraudet 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Himerios' Constantinople having *λαγόνας*, which can mean both the flanks of a person and a physical space that lies on the side of something else, such as the banks of a river; see LSJ s.v. *λαγών*.

sea and an island on land” (καὶ γίνεται τὸ θέαμα καινόν, πόλις ἐν θαλάσσει, καὶ νῆσος ἐν γῆ)<sup>39</sup>.

When, in the following paragraph, Himerios gets to describe Constantinople as an urban, rather than a natural, landscape, he chooses to do it through the simile of a golden necklace:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν ὄρω τοὺς λίθους ὁ χρυσός, οὕτω καὶ ἡ πόλις τῷ μεγέθει τὸ τῆς ὥρας ἄνθος ἐγκέκραται. ἐνθεν ὁ χρυσὸς μερίζει τὴν ὄψιν, ἐντεῦθεν τέχνη τοὺς θεωμένους ἀνθέλκουσι θαύμασιν· ἐντεῦθεν τὸ τῆς βουλῆς ἐκλάμπει συνέδριον, θέλγει τὰ λουτρά, προσδημαγωγεῖ τὰ θέατρα, κεστός ἀτεχνῶς τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τὰ σύμπαντα. (*Or.* 41.7)

For just as in a necklace gold <enhances> the gems, so too Constantinople combines the flower of beauty with its great size. Hence the city’s gold causes people to look now here, now there. The wonders of its craftsmanship attract those who behold them. Its senate-house shines forth, its baths are enchanting, its theatres also win people’s favour. Everything here is, quite simply, Aphrodite’s *kestos*.

The simile of the necklace is eminently typical of Late Antiquity in that, as Michael Roberts has shown in his influential study *The Jeweled Style*, Late Antique poetry has a distinct fascination with gold and jewels<sup>40</sup>. But even here there are elements of continuity with modes of viewing and representing that are characteristic of the Second Sophistic. The spectator, looking at Constantinople as though at a precious necklace, does not know where to focus his attention (he looks “now here, now there”). Again, in Achilles Tatios’ novel we have a similar reaction to the beauty of a city, Alexandria. Clitophon, who is the main hero and narrator of the novel, sets his eyes on Alexandria for the first time, and falls into a state of utter confusion, not knowing where to look first; he is said to be unable to discipline his eyes, which are enchanted by the loveliness of the

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<sup>39</sup> Achilles Tatios’ Alexandria (described in 4.12) is also presented as a paradoxical landscape: here the flooding of the Nile allows agricultural and maritime activities to appear side by side – another “curious spectacle” (θέαμα καινόν). For this “inversion motif” in a fourth-century hymn to the Nile, see Criboire 1995, 103-4. Himerios produces his own *ekphrasis* of Egypt in time of flood in *Or.* 48.8-9, where he highlights the “great wonder” of seeing “on a single plot of land [...] the same man playing the part of sailor and farmer”. On Himerios’ *Or.* 48 see now Milo 2012, 193-210.

<sup>40</sup> See Roberts 1989, 52ff.



city<sup>41</sup>. This “baroque” mode of viewing also looks forward to later works, where the confused gaze of the spectator is precisely the reaction desired by architects and commissioners of buildings: In Prokopios’ description of Hagia Sophia (*De Aed.* 1.1.47-9) we read a passage quite reminiscent of both Achilles Tatios and Himerios, in which the eye of the spectator is said to shift from one detail to the other unable to select which one to admire more than the others. Although there is “a single and most extraordinary harmony”, Prokopios says, the viewer is confused, drawn from side to side by an overwhelming and bewildering plethora of riches<sup>42</sup>.

At the same time, there is a particular kind of eroticism present in the descriptions of both Himerios and Achilles Tatios<sup>43</sup>. The cities attract and enchant the spectator; Himerios’ Constantinople is in its entirety Aphrodite’s *kestos* (a kind of magical breast halter, with an irresistible erotic allure)<sup>44</sup>. In *Oratio* 62, a much shorter speech Himerios had published for one of his Constantinopolitan students, he presents the city as a nymph bathing in the sea, embraced by her lover, Poseidon (*Or.* 68.2). Nonnos will later depict Beirut and Tyre in exactly the same terms in his *Dionysiaca*<sup>45</sup>. The Late Antique authors (Himerios and Nonnos) might live in a world radically different from that of Achilles Tatios and his contemporaries of the Second Sophistic, but the metaphors and general

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<sup>41</sup> On this passage see Morales 2004, 100-106.

<sup>42</sup> On the “cumulative aesthetic” in Late Antiquity see Elsner 2004, 304-9, where the passage from Prokopios is cited. For the overstimulation of the viewer and his dazzled vision in late Latin poetry see Roberts 1989, 73-5, and *idem* 2001, 546-9. A contemporary of Prokopios, Chorikios of Gaza also describes a church, that of St. Sergios, in very similar terms, with the eyes of the viewer drawn from one point to the other (*Laud. Marc.* 2.26): **μεθελκομένης** τῆς ὄψεως ἐξ ἑτέρου πρὸς ἕτερον - cf. Himerios’ **τέχλαι** τοὺς θεωμένους **ἀνθέλκουσι** θαύμασιν and Prokopios’ **μεθέλκει** τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἕκαστον.

<sup>43</sup> For the “feminised and sexualised” Alexandria of Achilles Tatios see Morales 2004, 106.

<sup>44</sup> By the end of the oration (*Or.* 41.16), Himerios will claim that his “words are leaping without restraint around their beloved” (**ἄμετρα σκιρτῶντας περὶ τὴν ἐρωμένην**).

<sup>45</sup> For the representation of Tyre as a swimming girl in the arms of Poseidon see 40.316-25, and for Beirut 41.28-37. Giraudet 2011, 151 argues that Nonnos was inspired directly by the description of Tyre in Achilles Tatios, where the city’s “neck” is mentioned (see above). Given that Himerios also describes a city as the beloved of Poseidon, who embraces and rejoices in her – a much closer parallel to the Nonnian images – the case for an “amplification” of a hint from Achilles Tatius seems weak.

conceptual frames they use to describe that world are *not* all that different. Himerios uses very skilfully all the cultural capital of Greece (literature, myths, sacred geography), to bestow more value on (and present as more central) those formerly marginal areas of the Greek East that are now important political centres. And, like his predecessors of the Second Sophistic, he is keenly aware of the task that he has to accomplish *through* his speech. The meta-literary or meta-rhetorical function of texts certainly does not disappear with the Second Sophistic.

#### 4. Epilogue: The active orator

At the very beginning of this oration, Himerios says that he will “light not a torch, but an oration for the emperor and the city”, τῷ τε βασιλεῖ καὶ τῇ πόλει λόγον ἀντὶ λαμπάδος ἀνάψωμεν. He immediately adds that “speeches are the children of Apollo”, λόγοι δὲ παῖδες Ἀπόλλωνος. In a brilliant conjunction of the motifs of light and filiation, Himerios’ speech becomes itself like Julian: it is Apolline, and it illuminates. If Himerios is, as Kennedy says<sup>46</sup>, a Late Antique Pindar, like his archaic predecessor, he is also aware of the social and political value of his words of praise.

The most interesting display, however, of Himerios’ conception of himself as an author and intellectual is the way he represents other authors (both poets and prose writers) in his work. What Lieberg called the “Figur des handelnden Dichters” in Himerios is indeed striking<sup>47</sup>: Himerios will often name the poet or prose author as the agent of actions, which are in fact carried out by characters inside the work of that author. In this oration we have two examples of this trope<sup>48</sup>. In one he says, “When the poets were building the Argo [...] they favoured it with a divine crew”<sup>49</sup>. Obviously, it is not the poets who were physically building the Argo, but the characters inside their poems. The second example refers to a prose author: “in building up [a verbal picture of] an Assyrian city [i.e. Babylon] the Carian Muse – I mean Herodotos’ Muse [Hdt. 1.178-80], almost

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<sup>46</sup> See Kennedy 1983, 147: “The speech is to the Fourth Century what the poems of Pindar were to the early classical period. Modern critics generally have more taste for Pindar than for Himerios, but the primary reason for that may be the freshness with which Pindar seems to strike his lyre and the oppressive weight of a thousand years of literary history which mutes to our ears the bell-like tones of Himerios”.

<sup>47</sup> See Lieberg 1990.

<sup>48</sup> For some examples from other orations see 9.4 and 19; 46.6; 48.11.

<sup>49</sup> *Or.* 41.13: ποιηται μὲν οὖν τὴν Ἀργὴν τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς σκάφος **πηγνύμενοι**, [...] θεῶν αὐτῇ τὸν φόρτον οἶμαι χαρίζονται.

superior to poetry – divides and walls the city by means of a barbarian river [i.e. the Euphrates]”<sup>50</sup>. Herodotos, whom Himerios might as well have considered a good mirror for himself, as he composed his work in prose, but gave it poetic qualities that made it almost superior to poetry (hence the presence here of the Muse), literally builds up the Assyrian city (πόλιν ἐγείρουσα). Penella’s translation supplements “the verbal picture”, which is not in fact in the text. Having the “verbal picture” in this sentence would imply representation and *phantasia* in the meaning of “visualisation”. Himerios does not speak about representation; he highlights the power of speech and writing to actually create worlds – worlds which could, conceivably, outlast their “real” referents, like the work of Herodotos outlasted Babylon. Himerios, like Herodotos and the poets, has the power to “create” things, to build cities and ships<sup>51</sup>. And here we have an oblique, but important, acknowledgement of the orator’s realisation of his own authority and role as an agent in history and politics: he can “construct” Constantinople through his illuminating speech, and he can make it the new centre of the world<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> *Or.* 41.10: ἡ μὲν οὖν Καρίνη Μοῦσα, τὴν Ἡροδότου λέγω, τὴν μικροῦ νικῶσαν καὶ ποίησιν, Ἀσσυρίαν τινὰ πόλιν ἐγείρουσα, βαρβάρῳ ποταμῷ σκίξει καὶ περιβάλλει τὴν πόλιν.

<sup>51</sup> In *Or.* 68.6, where Himerios refers to the (Neoplatonic) god, who is the creator and dispenser of all things, he calls him “the great sophist (σοφιστής) in heaven”. As Kennedy 1983, 148 puts it, “Sophistic creativity is a microcosm of the universe”.

<sup>52</sup> I would like to thank Helen Morales, Jan Stenger, and Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

# SPECULATION AND CRISIS: SOME EXAMPLES IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES OF THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

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## 1. Introduction

In March 1950, Vicente Enrique y Tarancón, bishop of the Solsona diocese in Spain, published a pastoral letter entitled "Our Daily Bread". The document was a declaration of social predicament, which placed the bishop in a critical position before the government of General Franco that had emerged after the Spanish Civil War<sup>1</sup>.

The letter warns of the danger of food shortages, criticises speculators who become rich in the black market from the suffering of the most needed sectors and demands austerity and political responsibility on behalf of the authorities:

“We cannot remain silent... We will not stray from the master's guiding principle when we unleash our anathema against all those who are responsible for the workers and the poor not having enough to live. (...) It is not our intention to study the technical and economic nature of this problem, since this nature eludes the episcopal ministry (...) Staple food is not being rationed in sufficient quantities or thereabouts, to meet the needs of families. Although at high prices it is not difficult to find an abundance of bread and other foodstuff, workers, employees and almost all those who survive on a daily wage or salary do not have the means to acquire them at

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<sup>1</sup> During the historical process known as the *Spanish transition to democracy*, which took place in the 70s, Cardinal Tarancón (1907-1994) was one of the main protagonists. Repudiated by the more reactionary factions of Francoism, he knew how to keep the Spanish Church on the sidelines of political manipulation and played a major conciliatory role between the factions involved in the democratic change which came about after the death of Franco.

the exorbitant prices that are the result of the egotism of many. Nobody could have been surprised that at the end of the war, we would have to suffer the shortage, a necessary consequence of such a war. (...) but it has been over ten years since then. During these ten years, there are many who have taken advantage of the scarcity to make big business (...) The example set by those above has an extraordinary influence on society as a whole (...) All those who hold an office or have some form of social responsibility or authority should set an example of austerity, honour, justice and charity. What right and, moreover, what power do they have to impose and demand austerity and honour from others, when they themselves don't practise it? (...) It is clear that the true and peculiar purpose of civil authority is to ensure the material and social well-being of its citizens."<sup>2</sup>

The current relevance of these social injustices and the continued existence of the critical contents of this document throughout history are indisputable. Its motive is a concern for the suffering of those who are most in need, whilst condemning the avaricious people who profit from such suffering.

In the course of History, scientific and social progress has not eliminated greed and lack of solidarity among human beings. As such, the episcopal letter included at the beginning of this work helps to exemplify those attitudes. It also allows us to look back at the past and find that in the institutional declaration of the emperor Diocletian there was a similar condemnation of the indecent people who increased their own wealth, whilst exploiting the needs of others.

In the foreword of the Edict on Maximum Prices, published in the year 301, Diocletian (*qui parentes sumus generis humani*) proclaims himself to be overtly in favour of “public utility” and the “common interests”, and attacks the merchants of basic commodities, labelling them true criminals. They are the same hoarders and speculators that our bishop refers to. But the imperial edict lacks the strictly religious stance of the episcopal letter; either does it call for austerity, honour or responsibility of the authorities:

“Who has so insensible a heart or has removed himself so far from human feeling that he can fail to know – that he has not in fact felt in commercial affairs, whether done in trade or dealt with in the cities' daily exchange – to what an extent shameless pricing has spread? Neither abundance of goods nor the bounty of good years tempers this unrestrained lust for stealing! As

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<sup>2</sup> V. Enrique y Tarancón, extracts from the pastoral letter *El pan nuestro de cada día*: <http://2006.atrio.org/?p=665>

a result, there is no doubt this sort of men who have experience in these jobs plainly always hang in suspense even concerning the motions of the stars, they try to catch the very breezes and storms, and by their own iniquity they cannot endure that prosperous farmland should be drenched by rains from above, to the hope of future fruits – since they think it their own loss if material plenty is produced by the moderating influences of the very sky (...) Although they each wallow in the greatest riches, with which nations could have been satisfied, they chase after personal allowances and hunt down their chiseling percentages. On their greed, provincial citizens, the logic of our shared humanity urges us to set a limit (...) Therefore we decree that these prices, which the written text of the subjoined abstract indicates, be kept by the observance of our whole realm (...) We decree that if anyone should, in his boldness, strive against the form of this statute, he shall undergo a capital penalty. And let not anyone suppose that a hardship is being enacted, since the observance of restraint is present and available as a safe haven for avoiding the penalty. To the same penalty also will be subject that person who from his eagerness to buy colludes with the greed of the seller contrary to the statute. Nor will he be, exceptionally, exempt from injury of this sort who supposes that he ought to hold back necessary kinds of food or service when he has them after the regulation of this statute, since the punishment ought to be even more serious for someone who initiates a scarcity than for someone who brandishes it contrary to the statute.”<sup>3</sup>

At that time, it was not uncommon for landowners and merchants to share an equal status, given that there was no clear socioeconomic definition for the powerful. The emperor, in theory defender of public interests, represents the state and carries all the legal burden of citizens' rights. Before him, however, there is no social group made up of businessmen, interested in production and its profits, while at the same time conscious of their own collective power. In such a place, dispersed speculative interests and an excessive desire for luxuries are only found among traders, while landowners identify themselves with the emperor without renouncing the profits of their exploitation.

## 2. Speculation

The imperial ban on selling at exorbitant prices punished both speculating on a producer who traded consumable goods as well as the

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<sup>3</sup> *Edictum De Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, extracts from the foreword. Translation of Jacqueline Long: <http://orion.it.luc.edu/~jlong1/priceed.htm>

resulting conflict with prosperous landlords. This scenario is well exemplified by the emperor Julian, when he stationed himself in Antioch with his army in the years 362-363, during his campaign against the Persians. In February of the year 363, four months before dying on the battlefield, Julian wrote “The Discourse of Antioch”, or *Misopogon*. It was an accusation against the inhabitants of this city, a bastion of Christianity, in response to the antipathy and lack of appreciation with which they had received him<sup>4</sup>. The emperor retains his personality and decisions in an ironic and self-critical tone throughout the discourse. In the document his comments, of particular interest to us, are about the measures he took against those dignitaries of the city, whom he believed to be exacerbating the overpricing of basic goods in times of severe economic crisis, caused by a prolonged drought:

“Do you not see what a number of shops there are in this city? But you [Julian] are hated by the shopkeepers because you do not allow them to sell provisions to the common people and those who are visiting the city at a price as high as they please. The shopkeepers blame the landowners for the high prices; but you [Julian] make these men also your enemies, by compelling them to do what is just. Again, those who hold office in the city are subject to both penalties; I mean that just as, before you came, they obviously used to enjoy profits from both sources, both as landowners and as shopkeepers, so naturally they are now aggrieved on both accounts, since they have been robbed of their profits from both sources.”<sup>5</sup>

And he severely accuses: “the powerful citizens hate me because they are prevented from selling everything at a high price.”<sup>6</sup>

The antipathy of the Antioch merchants had grown with the sales price restrictions put in place, hence the emperor's response. However, the complaints of the traders and retailers were based on the difficulty of bearing the losses caused by the imperial edict, since the army's presence in the city had worsened the supply of goods and inflated the prices:

“The emperor (...) unduly depressed the prices of commodities; neither taking into account the circumstances of that time, nor reflecting how much the presence of an army inconveniences the population of the provinces, and of necessity lessens the supply of provisions to the cities.

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<sup>4</sup> Downey 1951.

<sup>5</sup> Julian, *Misopogon* 13; transl. Wilmer C. Wright, *Loeb Class. Lib.*

<sup>6</sup> Julian, *Misopogon* 19, *ibid.*

The merchants and retailers therefore left off trading, being unable to sustain the losses which the imperial edict entailed upon them; consequently the necessaries failed.”<sup>7</sup>

Such imperial regulations did not usually solve the problem and they only helped to regulate the prices temporarily. In this case, however, the emperor decided to import wheat and sell it in better conditions when observing that the main crisis was a consequence of the shortage of grain:

“Now these were very trivial matters and could not so far make the city hostile to me. But my greatest offence of all, and what aroused that violent hatred of yours, was the following. When I arrived among you the populace in the theatre, who were being oppressed by the rich, first of all cried aloud, "Everything plentiful; everything dear!" On the following day I had an interview with your powerful citizens and tried to persuade them that it is better to despise unjust profits and to benefit the citizens and the strangers in your city. And they promised to take charge of the matter, but though for three successive months I took no notice and waited, they neglected the matter in a way that no one would have thought possible. And when I saw that there was truth in the outcry of the populace, and that the pressure in the market was due not to any scarcity but to the insatiate greed of the rich, I appointed a fair price for everything, and made it known to all men. And since the citizens had everything else in great abundance, wine, for instance, and olive oil and all the rest, but were short of corn, because there had been a terrible failure of the crops owing to the previous droughts, I decided to send to Chalcis and Hierapolis and the cities round about, and from them I imported for you four hundred thousand measures of corn. And when this too had been used, I first expended five thousand, then later seven thousand, and now again ten thousand bushels -- "modii" as they are called in my country -- all of which was my very own property; moreover I gave to the city corn which had been brought for me from Egypt; and the price which I set on it was a silver piece, not for ten measures but for fifteen, that is to say, the same amount that had formerly been paid for ten measures.”<sup>8</sup>

The arrival of wheat from other surplus-producing countries shows the perverse speculative nature of the crisis, as well the limited ability of the Antioch tradesmen to import grain and to compete with those who forced the purchase of goods at exorbitant prices. It is also possible, however, that they were prevented from doing so by the large producers, who had

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<sup>7</sup> Socrates Sch., *Eccles. Hist.* 3. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Julian, *Misopogon* 33, *op. cit.*



become mere accumulators of the scarce local wheat supply and were not willing to permit the free operation of the market system. In this case, it was only power and imperial determination which were able to solve the severe situation, at least for the time being.

We can see another example of this speculative ambition in the account of Libanios regarding his personal involvement in the new crisis that threatened Antioch soon after Julian's solution. Between the years 381 and 383, drought and famine caused severe social unrest, which Libanios handled using his expert rhetoric, safeguarding bakers from popular rage (Lib., *Orat.* 1. 205-208). In 384, the measures taken by the authorities exacerbated the economic losses of these workers, and it was only the intervention of Libanios that ensured families had enough bread to eat (*Orat.* 1. 226)<sup>9</sup>. Such a fast solution suggests that there had been previous speculative hoarding.

Moreover, in a letter addressed to Nicomachus Flavianus (385-386), Symmachus criticizes the ineffectiveness of Pinianus (his successor in the prefecture of Rome) and his wrong management of food supply; since "when the fear of falling prices will have led the City to a shortage, speculative selling will increase the benefit of those having the abundance of products."<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Measures against the economic crisis

The previous examples show the obscene behaviour of certain careless merchants, who earn higher profits whenever there are shortages in the supply of basic goods. But apart from these events outlining concrete problems and how they were solved by imperial measures, or the abuse of black market practices, the 4<sup>th</sup> century is the beginning of a general trade revival in the Roman Empire. This was particularly true in the eastern provinces, which had better endured the problems of the previous century and benefitted from the peace and stability of the new age. The market integrated and boosted by a common monetary system which had characterised the Early Imperial age<sup>11</sup>, began to fragment during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. This prolonged its regionalisation and the different levels of production and trade between the territories that were a part of the Roman

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<sup>9</sup> Petit 1955, 119-121.

<sup>10</sup> Symmachus, *Ep.* 2. 55

<sup>11</sup> Kessler and Temin 2008.

Empire, until reaching the profound and significant changes of the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>.

In this new age, the emperor's importance did not decrease, as demonstrated by the measures adopted by Constantine. The state of the economy deteriorated because of a lack of confidence in the billon currency, whose use had been promoted by Diocletian. Constantine reacted by putting a new currency into circulation, the *solidus*, which weighed 4.54 grams at a ratio of 72 coins per pound of gold. It was a strong currency that was highly valued because of the precious metal with which it was minted. This new currency helped to support the most important trade negotiations until well into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but it eliminated the bronze currency to the extent that gold even had to be used in everyday transactions. The spread of gold, its preference as a safe currency, the power granted to those in possession of it and the abuses carried out in its name were the cause of much social criticism. The author of *De rebus bellicis* blames Constantine for the excessive rise of gold and silver, which increases inflation to unsustainable levels and depreciates the billon to the extent that it becomes useless, whilst also widening the social divide between the rich and the poor and leading to the resentment and the revolts of the most desperate in society<sup>13</sup>. The anonymous writer establishes himself as a defender of taxpayers, proposing and offering suggestions on how to reduce public spending, controls the minting of coins to prevent fraud of fine metal content, solve the problem of corruption among provincial governors and minimise the financial burden of military costs:

“Having mentioned the State menaces, those which should be drawn away using imperial measures; I will introduce now the way to reduce, in an appropriate manner, the large military expenses, whose provision is sustained by the entire State tax management”<sup>14</sup>.

The army ensured that all frontiers were secured and thus the very existence of the state guaranteed. For the army to run properly, the largest share of the imperial budget had to be invested in the army; hence the decisions of governors, and in particular those decisions related to prices, the issuance of currency and the availability of precious metals, depended on the supply and organisation of its legions. The price formation

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<sup>12</sup> McCormick 2001, 83-119.

<sup>13</sup> Banaji 2001, 39-88.

<sup>14</sup> *De reb. bell.* 5.1

mechanism in the Late Empire was in part due to supply and demand criteria, business brokerage and distance from the production centres, with the resulting costs being derived from these; the quantity of metals in circulation also influenced the process, however. Inflation was dependent on this availability of currency and in turn determined the prices of market transactions. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, manipulation of the silver currency had put a strain on business activity: the Antoninian, created by Caracalla in 215 and equivalent to two denarius but with its content of silver reduced by 20%, was continually losing the proportion of this metal until it gradually became a worthless billon currency, whose minting was fixed in 274 by Aurelian at a ratio of one part silver to 20 parts copper<sup>15</sup>. The collection of state tax in currency had become affected by the serious financial problems that arose towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and its inflationary impact on prices forced Aurelian to change to taxation in kind. Collection of currency did not disappear, but it lost its use as a measure of value<sup>16</sup>.

Diocletian tried to restore the purchasing power of gold to its pre-274 levels with his edict. Beyond the short-term success of his measures, the fact is that towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the value of gold increased by two and a half times more than it had been before 274. It stayed at this value for the next two centuries<sup>17</sup>. It was during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries that the issuance of gold or, to put it differently, its quantity and quality, was largely responsible for the rise in prices. The biggest rise occurred between 300-367, when gold and silver prices increased by 16.90% and 17.46% each year respectively<sup>18</sup>, while some common goods such as wheat, certain meats and fish, wine, olives and oil saw similar price rises (between 17% and 20% annually). In the two following decades some of the prices, such as those of wheat, stabilised while others curbed to below 3%. From the year 390, instead of fixing the value of products by a nominal price per unit, the custom of setting a relationship between the number of objects and the weight in gold was popularised. Certain prices decreased slightly, while others stabilised and kept rising slowly by around

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<sup>15</sup> The emperor's importance in the reform justifies how some modern authors have named the new currency *aurelianian* (Callu 1969, 325-327).

<sup>16</sup> Lo Cascio 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Rathbone 2009, 317-321.

<sup>18</sup> Between 310 and 370 the price of gold increased about 12,000 times, producing the inevitable decline in the divisional currency's purchasing power and speeding up the process of general inflation (Carlà 2009a, table 1 and charts 1 to 3).

3% until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>, contributing to the process of economic recovery that had been produced during the last century.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the edicts of emperors Valentinian, Constantius II, Theodosios II and Valentinian III, tried to stabilise the price of gold to prevent hoarding, this fact demonstrates the imbalance between the value of gold coins on the markets and the higher price of the unrefined metal. As a consequence, speculators would have preferred to melt the coins in order to make gold ingots and sell them for a higher price of the same in silver coins. This would cause an inevitable reappraisal of the *denarii*, resulting in a devaluation of the gold coins and finalising a vicious circle of speculative purchasing and selling. The result would be an ultimate failure of Constantine and his successors' intention of turning gold into tax payment, inundating the market with state reserves and wealth seized from cities and temples<sup>20</sup>.

Nevertheless, current studies of the Low-Imperial economy is often very concerned with the decadent and backward image which the 3<sup>rd</sup> century has projected on all events occurring thereafter; a negative and exaggerated vision which has stimulated debate about a hypothetical regression of the natural economy, to the detriment of what had been a buoyant Early Imperial monetary economy<sup>21</sup>. The disappearance of the currency in a large number of transactions was caused by an inflationary spiral and the progressive increase in precious metal prices. However, the decrease in long-distance trade and the process of commercial decline were the result of political instability, power struggles, porous borders and the constant threat of barbarian peoples. Nevertheless, the needs of a population which had become used to trade did not disappear. The supply operations of a military complex guarding the borders of the empire even increased, and the surplus of the most productive zones continued to be sold, as demonstrated by the relationship of transport rates (*naula*) which were fixed in the Edict on Maximum Prices.

The 4<sup>th</sup> century was not an economically decadent period. Archaeological work on the rural world in the late period contains vast amounts of material documentation, which concludes that there existed a productive

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<sup>19</sup> Depeyrot 1996, 127-136. Refer to the tables for prices of grain and wheat in units of account and in gold in Lo Cascio 1997, 174-177.

<sup>20</sup> Read note 574 *infra*.

<sup>21</sup> Banaji 2001, 23-38, provides information in support of this argument and, using Mickwitz's work with respect to monetary vitality in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as a basis, he rejects Weber's ideas on the isolationism of Late Antiquity.

boom<sup>22</sup>. The crisis, which began towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, had had a profound effect on the earlier times of prosperity. But Roman society was able to adapt to the radical changes that had occurred, overcoming misgovernment and thus helping reformed institutions to prolong the cohesion of the Empire and maintain a functioning state; even though at the end of the catharsis there would be an even wider division in society between the powerful and vulnerable, between the rich and the underprivileged.

Largely responsible for this adaptation was a cessation of attacks from barbarian peoples and a fortification of the defence lines. Without neglecting constant military surveillance, the rulers were able to make various reforms while even standing up to internal power struggles. The relative peace in the internal provinces led to a certain recovery in the vitality of citizens and their productive activities, in a socio-economic landscape which was principally changed as a result of the increased tax burden. The contributory benefits of the communities, previously worked out and demanded by state officials, were to be collected by *curialis* under the principle of monetary co-responsibility<sup>23</sup>. This obligation put pressure on them to take the tax burdens from the poorest citizens while the most powerful could avoid them, which also turned them into feared and hated individuals among taxpayers. The situation worsened because big landowners not only avoided such tax levies, but also did the same with their potential titles such as *curialis* by making their permanent homes the *villae*, which had by now been converted into self-sufficient centres, detached from the economy and citizens' control<sup>24</sup>. This autonomy did not, however, affect commercial interests. The close-knit relationship between city and countryside continued, having now adapted to the reality of these *villae*, which had established themselves as new centres of consumption. The flow of trade was reciprocated; as it can be deduced from certain legal

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<sup>22</sup> “The 4<sup>th</sup> century is, with regard to agricultural communities, a golden age, a period of splendour and productive stability” (Ariño and Díaz 2002, 59).

<sup>23</sup> Slootjes 2006, 37

<sup>24</sup> Legislation attempted to stop this situation, in view of the importance of public administration and tax collection for the emperor. In 396 Arkadios and Honorius, by means of a measure rarely put into practice, ordered the curial officials not to leave the cities and live in their rural properties, under the threat of adding these to the treasury and taking them out of their possession: *curiales omnes iubemus interminatione moneri, ne civitates fugiant aut deserant rus habitandi causa, fundum, quem civitati praetulerint, scientes fisco esse sociandum eoque rure esse carituros, cuius causa impios se vitando patriam demonstrarint* (CTh. 12.18.2).

provisions where a relatively fluid relationship among settlers-turned-businessmen who trade in the cities can be discerned<sup>25</sup>; and in the other direction, also in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the biggest supply of urban goods occurred in the *villae* of Roman Spain<sup>26</sup>, as well as the most fluid input of currency in a way that had never happened before<sup>27</sup>. We also know that the population of rural Egypt during that same century paid taxes in both currency and kind simultaneously<sup>28</sup>. This was all caused by the *adaeratio*, that imperial ambition to receive taxes in the form of gold, preferring it to payment in kind<sup>29</sup>.

The resilience of the rural world in the Late Antiquity period has been highlighted by Banaji, who studied the period in depth and extracted, from the sources consulted, an overview of settlements throughout the Empire ranging from the *villae* of the rich, to the more modest agricultural facilities such as the *castella*, *vici* and *casae* in the central and eastern areas of the Mediterranean<sup>30</sup>, as well as more densely populated communities in the east, surrounded by fertile and productive land. The late Roman field received large investments which came from the gold accumulated

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<sup>25</sup> *Colonus rei privatae vel ceteros rusticanos pro speciebus, quae in eorum agris gigni solent, inquietari non oportet. Eos etiam, qui manu victum rimantur aut tolerant, figulos videlicet aut fabros, alienos esse a praestationis eius molestia decernimus, ut hi tantum, qui pro mercimonio et substantia mercis ex rusticana plebe inter negotiatores sunt, sortem negotiationis agnoscant, quos in exercendis agris ingenitum iam pridem studium non retinet, sed mercandis distrahendisque rebus institutum vitae et voluntatis implicuit* (CTh. 13.1.10).

<sup>26</sup> The new drive of construction and costly embellishment to the *villae* in Roman Spain during this period (Chavarría 2005) can only be explained by the increase in wealth obtained from surplus production.

<sup>27</sup> Ariño and Díaz 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Boek 2008.

<sup>29</sup> According to the model proposed by Hopkins (1980; 1995-1996), Constantine and his successors' aim was to boost monetary circulation by injecting a large quantity of precious metals into the trade system, taken from state reserves and through confiscation of wealth from the temples. This was to happen in a way that the gold and silver in circulation would also help to stimulate private capital, and the increased monetary mass would return to the imperial coffers by way of taxes, as had already occurred in the Principality because of a need of paying taxes in coin at the request of Augustus. Doubt has been cast on this model by various authors (see von Reden 2002), but its influence on scientific debate is permanent.

<sup>30</sup> They may be identified by the so called *agglomérations secondaires* of Gaul and Germania, as per the terminology used by some authors (see Petit and Mangin 1994).

after the monetary policy of Constantine and his successors, and an expansion of arable land led to an increase in production and trade with the surplus. The prosperity of the late Roman agriculture was notable in the eastern provinces, where previously abandoned areas during the Early Empire were reoccupied, such as Greece; some farmland was expanded to marginal places like the eastern hills of Antioch or the southern and eastern desert territories of Nessana. Meanwhile in Egypt, where the opportunity to expand the land was scarce, rich landowners' investments went to agricultural production based on permanently irrigated fields<sup>31</sup>.

The bigger the imbalance of the centralised financial economy, the more important the rural economy becomes. It is an importance that is traditional, permanent and based on activities and occupations which are firmly entrenched in ancient societies and in Roman culture in particular. One of the main differences between the production centres of the Late Empire and its predecessors was the phenomenon of concentration of property, which was a result of marriage between inheritors, mortgage foreclosures, letting of *patrimonium* land and even secondments of proprietor settlers. Such great possessions of the Late Antiquity period generated the agricultural surplus required to sustain the imperial supply and contributed to the flow of exchange between interregional markets. These activities were paid with precious currency. Unfortunately, a lack of mercantile spirit<sup>32</sup> among the rich elite and the huge socioeconomic gap that had emerged between them and a wretched peasantry meant that the economic growth could not be sustained. The desire for quick profit favoured speculation, to the detriment of permanent, productive trade.

#### 4. Conclusions

The Late Empire state authorities were active agents in economic intervention, directly influencing the prices and conditions of mercantile trade. Imperial decisions regarding fiscal policy were usually subordinate to the needs of the army and were never designed or executed as measures to reinvigorate or revitalise the economy. Most of the population which stocked up on local markets was severely affected by the slowdown of interregional trade, and in particular by the excessive input of gold coins

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<sup>31</sup> Banaji 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Although conscious of the welfare provided by such trade in their daily lives, the Roman elite and its governments were not fully committed to developing it (Harris 2003).

ending in the bronze currency. However, basic food requirements must have triggered a bigger demand for products from such local markets, and the decrease in imports had to be replaced by nearby surpluses, with the immediate effect of an increase in production from agricultural farming.

The process of acquisition, expansion, cultivation, adaptation and accumulation of arable land that occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> century created vast amounts of wealth and provided generous profits for the landowners, while at the same time increasing the huge social and economic division with the peasantry. The investments which were necessary for the new agricultural farmland, the construction of manor houses and the adornment of these *villae*, are all manifestations of a time of prosperity and social leadership for these social elite. They clearly demonstrate the value of surplus production and its commercialisation to obtain the wealth required to embellish ones possessions. The spread of small rural groups also demonstrates the importance of agricultural production to the economy, while the value and lure of the countryside is evinced by imperial provisions that unsuccessfully attempt to keep the most important people in the cities. However, it must be recognised that the substantial importance of agricultural activity and its benefits to the Roman economy helped to advance big landowners even further. These were incapable of looking beyond the immediate profits of their agricultural production and were not competent enough to embark on new business ventures and mercantile activities by managing their surpluses. The times of crisis, which often turn out to be so useful for carrying through fundamental changes and progressing, were on this occasion wasted opportunities. Meanwhile, awaiting for conflicts, scarcity or famine, the vultures of speculation continued prying around and hoarding gold or stocking up on wheat, allowing them to intervene in the black market and turn necessity into indecent wealth.



BETWEEN THE THIRD ROME  
AND THE NEW JERUSALEM:  
THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE  
VIEWED BY RUSSIANS<sup>1</sup>

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‘A new third Rome will rise, truly Rome-love  
that will respond to all anguishes’  
—*Sergei N. Bulgakov*<sup>2</sup>

‘The Lord hath made known his salvation:  
His righteousness hath he openly  
showed in the sight of the heathen’  
—*Psalm 98, 2*<sup>3</sup>

The night of May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1453, a partial eclipse of the moon was already interpreted as an unpropitious omen by the wretched inhabitants of Constantinople. In four days, the city would fall to the Turks, thus putting the final nail to the coffin of the Roman Empire. Niccolò Barbaro, the Venetian physician witness to fall of the City, narrates as well how the Emperor Constantine XI, aware of the exiguous forces on his side, despite his concessions at the Council of Ferrara, and refusing to flee the city, as advised by members of his court, stated that the city could only put its

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<sup>1</sup> I have greatly benefited from the comments and suggestions made by Donald Ostrowski (University of Harvard) to this article before its publication. His generosity has been, as always, beyond my capacity of expressing my deep gratefulness in words. All mistakes and shortcomings remain solely mine.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in B. Marchade, “Sergei Bulgakov and ‘The Roman Temptation’.” In *S. N. Bulgakov: Religious and philosophical Road*, Moscow: Russkyj Put’, 2003: 274

<sup>3</sup> All Biblical quotations in English in the present article are given following the King James version (Carroll and Prickett, 1997)

trust in Christ, His Mother and in the Emperor Constantine, its founder<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the eclipse and other signs were already foretellers of the disaster to come: the Emperor died in the siege, by the walls, the City was rampaged and Santa Sophia sacked, which, according to some sources, was deeply regretted by Mehmet II himself<sup>5</sup>.

The Fall of Constantinople, 1123 years after it had been inaugurated by its founder, Emperor Constantine, also referred to as Second Rome, or New Rome, was indeed a shock to its contemporaries, probably to some more than to others. The present article tries to elucidate whether there was any relation between the Fall of Constantinople and the emergence of the myth of Moscow as the 'Third Rome' and whether the myth was, or was not, a direct effect of the former.

The relation of Russia, or Rus', at that time, with Byzantium, the Eastern Empire, had started almost five centuries before, when Princess Olga had been baptised in Constantinople in 955 and later Vladimir converted Kievan Rus' to Christianity in 988. By accepting Christianity in the Eastern rite, Rus' entered what Dimitri Obolensky called the Byzantine Commonwealth<sup>6</sup>. They were not the only ones, Bulgaria, Serbia,

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<sup>4</sup> Barbaro, 47, ed. E. Cornet 1856.

<sup>5</sup> Doukas, 40, ed. V. Grecu 1958; Kritoboulos 68, 2-3, ed. D.R. Reinsch 1983.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'Byzantine Commonwealth' coined somewhat diffusely by Obolensky himself has been useful in late decades to denote those territories who adopted Christianity in the Eastern Orthodox rite and were, at least immediately after their conversion to Christianity, culturally as well as religiously influenced by Byzantium. Whether the term would or should incorporate a political dimension, more in accordance with the modern sense of Commonwealth, or whether Obolensky himself applied it rigorously in his own study, is another matter (cf. Raffensperger, 2003). Of course the position of all these territories changed over the course of time with respect to Byzantium, even when a greater cultural and religious homogeneity was still present (acknowledgement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, origin of translated texts, church and court rituals). Despite denoting mainly a communion of religious interests and practices, it cannot be denied that it had a cultural dimension as well that joined these areas together, particularly if compared to those territories who adopted Christianity in the Latin rite. Other equally satisfactory attempts have been made to take into account the similarities and differences among Slavs in the course of time, from the *Cyrrillo-Methodiana* denomination of Central Europe, taking into account the Christianised Slavic speaking territories before the Schism of 1054, to the rather more cultural division between *Slavia Ortodossa* and *Slavia Romana*, proposed by R. Picchio, or

Macedonia and other territories had also become ‘members’ before them, but in the long run it was going to be Rus’ the only one that managed to establish itself as a strong political and religious entity. It would be easy to state, as has traditionally been done, that Russia was the only one susceptible to inherit the imperial crown of Constantinople, that there was certain teleology in the so-called doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome, but the truth is that the relation between both facts is dim. The supposed messianic call of Moscow to become ‘the’ stronghold of Orthodox Christianity is probably more linked to an Old Testament ideology of the chosen people encapsulated in the ‘land-temple-monarchy’ principle than to a feeling of continuation of the Roman Empire by the newly created principality of Moscow. The Fall of Constantinople came to corroborate, only to a certain extent, and analysed backwards *a fortiori*, the place of Russia in history.

## 1. The Fall

The City of Constantinople, built upon the ancient Greek colony of *Byzantion*, had been erected copying to the utmost detail Old Rome: it was outlined with fourteen regions and seven hills, and the building policy of both Constantine and his successors was as imitative of the original Rome as it could possibly be. Its new inhabitants called themselves Byzantines, thus honouring the name of the city that Constantine had preferred even to Troy itself to become the new capital of the Eastern Empire (Herrin, 2008, 5-6). The city quickly acquired its new sobriquet ‘New Rome’ and, accordingly, its inhabitants considered themselves to be ‘Romans’ (in Greek, *Romaioi*) (Herrin, 2008, 25) and indeed enjoyed all the privileges of living in what had become, *de facto*, the only surviving capital of the Roman Empire, since Old Rome, even before its definitive Fall in 476, had been threatened and sacked by the Goths for decades<sup>7</sup>. The proud inhabitants of the New Rome apparently took no heed of St. Augustine of Hippo’s call to build the *City of God* after the sacking of 410. They preferred to become an Empire, and it was precisely this vanity what cost

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the later one proposed by W. Veder (2006) between *Slavia Slavonica* and *Slavia Latina*, according to the means and procedures of textual transmission.

<sup>7</sup> This denomination of Constantinople as the ‘New Rome’ was endorsed at the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381, Canon 3), and incorporated as well in Canon 28 at the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Chalcedon, 451). I thank D. Ostrowski for pointing me to these.

them so dear a thousand years later, according to some sources.

Aside from the accounts of the Fall in historiographic sources (Barbaro, Chalkokondyles, Doukas, Kritoboulos, Sphrantzes, Leonard of Chios, Ubertino Pusculo), mostly based on witnesses' accounts, another collection of documents reveals itself quite useful in order to know not so much the facts, but the perception and interpretation of those facts, and their eventual changes. In the songs and laments composed over the Fall of Constantinople (*threnos*), all anonymous authors coincide in qualifying the Fall of the City as a punishment from God. Regardless of their length, language or purported time of composition, they all present a similar structure. After commencing with a lament for the loss of the City, they offer an interpretation of the causes of the catastrophe, followed by a more or less detailed description of the siege itself (description of enemy forces, details of the sacking, final moments of the emperor) to end up with an exhortation to foreign powers to regain the City from the Infidel and an expression of hope in Divine Intervention<sup>8</sup>. The Fall of Constantinople was quickly interpreted in Byzantine sources as a divine punishment for the sins committed by the City, very much in line with the divinely inspired interpretation of history present in the Old Testament.

However, the role played by foreign powers as well as the trust in the future is modified as time goes by. Those composed soon after 1453 also express hope in a quick recovery of the City if Western powers unite in a new crusade to liberate it from the Turks. In one of the first ones to be composed after the Fall, probably within a few years, *Ἀλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, the Russians, not Moscow, are mentioned only once alongside other powers who betrayed the trust of Constantine XI after the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438. The anonymous author exculpates the Emperor since he had been cheated by all of those who were expected but never came:

Τὸ θάρρος ὁποῦ ἤλιζαν οἱ χριστιανοὶ ἔς τὴν Πόλιν  
ἦτον ἔς τὸν ἀγώτατον τὸν πάπαν τε τῆς Ρώμης,  
καὶ εἰς τοὺς γκαρδινάλιους του, νὰ δώσουσιν βοήθειαν·  
εἰς τοὺς ρηγάδες τῆς Φραγκιάς, τῶν ἀθηντῶν τῶν ὄλων,  
δοκάδες, κούντους, πρίγκιπες, καὶ τὰ κουμμούνια ὅλα,  
μετὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τε τοῦ τῆς Ἀλαμανίας,

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<sup>8</sup> The remarkable general introduction and partial studies in García Ortega and Fernández Galvín 2003 have provided most information for the present article in relation to the *threnoi*, as well as the critical editions of the texts in Greek included herewith.

Σέρβους και Ρούσους, Βλάχους τε, ὁμοίως και Οὐγγάρους.  
(vv. 173-179, García Ortega and Fernández Galvín, 2003, 72)<sup>9</sup>

This same author abounds in the idea that the loss of Constantinople is an immense tragedy to all Christians, Romans (which is his denomination for the Orthodox Christians) and Latins alike, and he exhorts foreign powers to regain the City as soon as possible, united under the command of the Pope. He includes in his long list of exhortations former Orthodox territories now under Turkish rule, such as Bulgaria and Serbia, but does not mention the Russians. The perception of the Fall being a divine punishment from God is in this piece very dim, rather the author cries out to God asking Him how could He let this happen.

This idea of the Fall of the City as a punishment from God that the City has brought upon itself is more explicit in later compositions. As time goes by and Western powers do not attempt to regain Constantinople, a series of supposed fulfilled prophesies appear in more recent compositions, as well as more references both to Old Testament and apocalyptic literature. In *Ανακαλημα τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* (circa. 1454), the Virgin and the angels decide to abandon the City in view of its sins (vv.110-118). Apparently, there was a popular legend in which the Virgin asked the Emperor to give her back the crown of the City, which she will hold until a God-sent candidate will come to recuperate the City for Christianity<sup>10</sup>. The idea of a self-inflicted punishment is also present in other *threnoi*, *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, *Θρήνος ἐπὶ ἀλώσεως τῆς Πόλεως*, *Θρήνος τῶν τεσσάρων πατριαρχείων Κωνσταντινουπόλης*, *Ἀλεξανδρείας*, *Ἀντιοχείας* καὶ *Ιερουσαλήμ*.

The only other composition where Moscow is mentioned is a lament composed by Matthew of Pogoniani (1550-1624) almost a century after the Fall and inserted within his verse chronicle of the history of Hungary-Wallachia. This is particularly relevant for our study because it mentions Moscow as a possible liberator, echoing a dubious identification of the blond people with the Russian people.

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<sup>9</sup> “The confidence of the Christians in that City was laid on the most holy Pope of Rome, and on his cardinals so they gave aid; on the kings of the West, on all the lords, dukes, counts, princes and all the cities, together with the emperor of Germany, Serbs and Russians, Walachians and Hungarians as well”. (Unless otherwise stated, all translations in the present article are mine)

<sup>10</sup> The idea of a God-sent ruler is frequent in apocalyptic literature, and was also present in Pseudo-Methodios *Revelation* or *Apocalypse* (see *infra*, n. 16).

ἐλπίζομεν καὶ εἰς ξανθὰ γένη νὰ μᾶς γλυτώσουν,  
νὰ ᾿λθοῦν ἀπὸ τὸν Μόσχοβον, νὰ μᾶς ἐλευθερώσουν.  
(vv. 2333-2334, García Ortega and Fernández Galvín, 2003, 212)<sup>11</sup>

This reference is relevant for two reasons: firstly, because Moscow has already acquired an international status which makes it a suitable liberator of the City (alongside Spain or Venice, according to Pogoniani); and, secondly, because the confusion of blond peoples with Russian peoples took place in the transmission of the Russian text, a version of which could have been available to the author either while he held the bishopric of Mira (Venice) or during his final retirement in Walachia, since the chronicle was composed between the appointment of Gabriel as *vojvoda* of Walachia, 1617, and the death of Pogoniani in 1624 (García Ortega, R and Fernández Galvín, A.I., 2003, 203)

The first mention of the blond (lat. *flavius*) peoples in relation to the fate of Constantinople is to be found in an oracle attributed to the Emperor Leo the Wise (886-912). Usually inserted after the Chronicle of Constantine Manasses (1130-1187) or Zonaras (d. after 1159?), the oracle might actually refer to the Sack of Constantinople in 1204, and therefore the *flavum genus* referred to in the text would actually be, as suggested by the editor of the *Patrologia Graeca*, the Franks.

Βύζαντος αὐλή, ἐστία Κωνσταντίνου, Ῥώμη, Βαβυλῶν, καὶ Σιών ἄλλη  
νέα, τρὶς τρὶς ἑκατὸν καὶ σὺ συνάρξεις κράτος μιᾶς ἐν αὐτοῖς ὑστερούσης  
εἰκαδός. Ὅς χροῦν ἀθροίσεις τῶν ἐθνῶν τὸ χρυσιόν, καὶ πασας ἄρξεις τὰς  
πέριξ φυλαρχίας. Ἀλλά σε πυρίστατον καὶ ξανθὸν γένος (65) πᾶσαν  
τεφρώσει καὶ τὸ σὸν λύσει κράτος<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> “We also have hopes in the blond/fair race to save us, that they come from Moscow and set us free”

<sup>12</sup> The text in the *PG* CVII follows the edition made alongside the Chronicle of Manasses as prepared by Johan Leunclavius (1533-1593). On this particular passage, the editor inserted the following note: “(65) Ἰλλά σε πυρίστατον καὶ ξανθὸν γένος. Antiquus interpres Oraculorum Leonis haec ita vertit: *Sed te ignis summus flavum genus*. Videtur ergo in codice eius pro πυρίστατον scriptum fuisse πῦρ ἰστατον. Illi vero, quos hic Leo igneum et flavum genus hominum appellat, videntur esse Latini, qui duce Balduino comite Flandrensium anno Christi 1203, fugato Alexio Angelo Comneno, Constantinopolim ceperunt, et integros quinquaginta annos occuparunt. Iidem similiter ξανθοιανθοῦν vero, quos hic Leo igneum et flavum genus hominum ἠιφέρων τε τὸν πόλεμον καὶ αὐτῶν ξανθῶν τὰ ἀμηνχανάς. (Bellum bellicaque flavorum populorum exercet, *Oracula Anonymi paraphrasis 1146B*)”. If we follow this reading, the translation of the oracle would be as follows: “The court of Byzantium, home of Constantine, another new Rome,

The text finishes with a recommendation to the City to pay more attention to the things of God, in order to receive divine protection.

The identification of this ‘pale’ or ‘blond’ race, then, does not necessarily refer to the liberators of Constantinople, although in another oracle it does refer to the expulsion of the Ismaelites uniting forces with the blond race (φέρων τε τὸν πόλεμον καὶ τῶν ξανθῶν τὰς μηχανάς). This second oracle is probably the one referred to by Pseudo-Sphrantzes in his *Chronica Maior*, in which a blond race will claim back the territory from the Ishmaelite people and expel them forever. A reference to this omen was also included in the Russian sources of the Fall.

### 1.1 The Fall in Russian sources

The literature concerning the Fall of Constantinople also arrived to Moscow in due time, and not very long after the event. The first account of the Fall is to be found in a historiographic source dated 1508 (Svod 1508. g.). This short version, most likely translated from a yet unknown Greek source, *Ο κατάκτησις τῆς Ἐπιτοῦνης πόλεως ἀπὸ τῶν ἀθεῖς Τούρκων* (On the capture of Constantinople by the atheist Turks), was elaborated and acquired its final form in a chronicle dated to the year 1520. Secondly, there is a lament, *Πλάχῃ ἐπὶ τῇ πτώσει τῆς Ἐπιτοῦνης πόλεως* (Lament on the Fall of Constantinople) included in another chronograph dated 1512, focused on the description of dramatic scenes during the sacking of the City; specialists have not yet reached an agreement on whether it was fully composed in Old Russian or whether it was an adapted translation of the *threnos* composed by John Eugenikos (b. after 1394-d. after 1454/5) that had been previously translated into Serbian. Finally there is another account, *Ποικίλη ἱστορία τῆς κατάκτησις τῆς Ἐπιτοῦνης πόλεως ἀπὸ τῶν Τούρκων ἐν τῷ 1453* (Tale of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in the year 1453), which has been preserved in two redactions: one, usually called the ‘Iskander’ redaction, because the most archaic manuscript preserved (TSL 773), from the linguistic point of view, contains a colophon with this name, a certain Nestor Iskander<sup>13</sup>; and

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Babylon and Sion, for three and three hundred [years] you will rule jointly as one power among them until the twentieth day of the last month, in which you will gather together a heap of gold of these peoples and you will rule over all these tribes. But a blond (pale) race and the last fire will consume you completely to ashes and you will lose your power.”

<sup>13</sup> Some specialists have pointed out the possibility that this name could actually be a literary character, and not a real person, added by the scribe to give more realism to his piece (Tvorogov 2000, 494). ‘Iskander’ would be the Turkish form of

a second one, traditionally labelled ‘chronographic’, because it lacks the colophon, apart from other differences, and because its main source seems to have the chronographic text included in the chronicle of 1520. The final version (our second redaction) would be included in the Chr. of 1533, and it was the most widely diffused<sup>14</sup>.

This Russian text includes a tale of the Foundation of the City by Constantine, even an omen on its future Fall in the hands of the Infidels<sup>15</sup>.

Alexander. Both the dates of composition and copy of this text are unknown. The only time reference we have is an *ante quem*, since this version was included in a Serbian manuscript (Hil. 280) dated in 1585 (Casas Olea 2003, xxviii). The differences in the Serbian text by comparison to the so-called ‘Iskander’ redaction leaves open the question of its direct filiation, in view of the other existing redaction of this very text of the Fall.

<sup>14</sup> The most significant differences between the two redactions are that the ‘Iskander’ one contains the colophon, at least in one mss. (TSL 773), and parts of the apocryphal *Vision of Daniel*, as well as biblical quotations and other prayers. The date of commencement of the Tale also varies: the first one starts in the year 5803 (295) and the second one in 5818 (311). This second one also includes a list of the Byzantine Emperors and the division into chapters (Casas Olea 2003, xxvii-xxx). A purported protograph has been adduced as a possible explanation for these differences, but, bearing in mind the fact that the second redaction was based upon *О взятии Цареграда от безбожных турчан* (On the capture of Constantinople by the atheist Turks), definitely based upon Greek sources, not only the purported protograph, but also the authorship or even the existence of Nestor Iskander itself should be called into question. The pre-eminence given to the ‘authorial’ redaction of Nestor Iskander, due to its supposed originality and to the conviction that it was composed in Russian by a Russian, is sustained only on a certain “archaic” language. If it had really preceded the redaction included in the chronicle of 1533, indirectly derived from a translation from a Greek source dated to 1508, Nestor’s version would have been dated between 1453, the year of the Fall, and 1508. Less than half a century in the evolution of the language should not be enough to hold a definite position over the relative composition dates of two texts in Medieval Russia, since it could also be the result of two diglossic uses of the same stage on linguistic evolution.

<sup>15</sup> This omen is, of course, a complete anachronism, since it occurs during the foundation of the City by Constantine, in the year 295 according to our tale, and 324 according to history. It describes how the Emperor Constantine the Great witnesses together with the citizens how a snake (serpent or dragon) came out of its shelter and suddenly from the sky an eagle descended upon the snake, captured it and flew away. The snake, however, managed to curl itself around the eagle, and finally the eagle fell to the ground on the same spot, since it had been overthrown by the serpent. People ran to the spot, killed the serpent and liberated the eagle. Although the omen might be remotely inspired in *Iliad*, Book XII, its interpretation



The Tale insists on the idea, already present in Byzantine sources, of understanding the attack of the Turks as the outcome of God's wrath. Surprisingly enough, it dwells long on the activities of the Genovese contingent, headed by Giustiniani, providing more details than other accounts, and presents the emperor as sacrificing himself for the Orthodox faith, going to meet his death in martyrdom.

The conclusion of the tale is relevant to our study because the author underlines two important ideas in characterising the Fall: firstly, it is as a self-inflicted punishment for its sins, and secondly it fulfils the prophecies of Methodios of Patara<sup>16</sup> and Leo the Wise, ending with the above-

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by sages questioned by Constantine, according to the text, was that the eagle was the symbol of Christianity and the snake represented the 'besermen', a people of subject to the Tatars, that has traditionally been equated by Russian historians to Muslims. The prophecy would indicate that Christianity was going to fall in the hands of that people, but later the city would be regained by Christians. In that sense, it might be more related to Apocalypse 12: 14-17.

<sup>16</sup> The text mentions "the prophecies of Methodios of Patara" when, in fact, it was probably referring to the text currently known as the *Revelation* or *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodios, the real one having been Methodios of Olympus, or Patara, in Lycia, depending on the sources. This apocalyptic text is believed to have been composed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and most likely in Syriac, although it was originally thought to have been composed in Greek. Among the many things to happen, the text mentions the victory of a God-sent Holy Roman emperor who will bring the terror of Islam to an end ("After a week of years, when they have already captured the city of Joppa (modern Jaffa), the Lord will send one of the princes of his host and strike them down in a moment. After this the King of the Romans will go down and live in Jerusalem for seven and a half-seven times, i.e., years. When the ten and a half years are completed the Son of Perdition [the Antichrist] will appear", ch. XIII, 21). This coming of a God-appointed king is situated in the apocalypse as happening after the liberation of the peoples that Alexander had enclosed beyond the Gates of the North (ch. XIII, 19-20) [the Gog and the Magog?; the Ishmaelites?]. The Son of Perdition, however, will reign in Jerusalem after the spirit of the King of the Romans had been taken up to heaven until the city will be finally freed by Enoch and Elijah ("When the Son of Perdition has arisen, the King of the Romans will ascend Golgotha upon which the wood of the Holy Cross is fixed, in the place where the Lord underwent death for us. The king will take the crown from his head and place it upon the cross and stretching out his hands to heaven will hand over the kingdom of the Christians to God the Father. The cross and crown of the king will be taken up together to heaven. This is because the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ hung for the common salvation of all will begin to appear before him at his coming to convict the lack of faith of the unbelievers. The prophecy of David which says, "In the last days Ethiopia will

mentioned oracle attributed to Leo the Wise: "The blond people together with those who founded [the City] in the past will defeat all the [race of] the Ishmaelite and will inherit the Seven Hills [City] together with their previous lawful [owners] and the blond people, sixth and fifth nation, will reign in it and will keep the Seven Hills, and will sow seeds in it and will feed many in revenge for the saints". It is apparently in the textual transmission of this version which explicitly included the paraphrase of the above-mentioned oracle where the term 'blond/fair' (lat. *falvus*; rus. *rusii*) started to be changed for 'ruskii' (Russians) in later copies, making therefore the Russians somehow liberators of the fallen City and heirs of the Empire<sup>17</sup>. However, the author, whoever he was, apparently saw no connection between the facts narrated in the tale and the future of Moscow, no trace of *translatio imperii*: only later copyists did in changing the ethnic ascription of the future liberators.

No other sources dealing specifically with the Fall of Constantinople

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stretch out her hand to God" [Psalm 67:32] will be fulfilled in that these last men who stretch out their hands to God are from the seed of Chuseth, the daughter of Phol, king of Ethiopia. When the Cross has been lifted up on high to heaven, the King of the Romans will directly give up his spirit. Then every principality and power will be destroyed that the Son of Perdition may manifest... When the Son of Perdition appears, he will be of the tribe of Dan, according to the prophecy of Jacob. This enemy of religion will use a diabolic art to produce many false miracles, such as causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear. Those possessed with demons will be exorcised. He will deceive many and, if he could, as our Lord has said, even the faithful elect. Even the Antichrist will enter Jerusalem, where he will enthrone himself in the temple as a god (even though he will be an ordinary man of the tribe of Dan to which Judas Iscariot also belonged). In those days, the Antichrist will bring about many tribulation; but God will not allow those redeemed by the divine blood to be deceived. For that reason, he will send his two servants, Enoch and Elias, who will declare the prodigies of the Antichrist to be false, and will denounce him as an impostor. After the death and ruin of many, he will leave the Temple in confusion; and many of his followers will forsake him to join the company of the righteous. The seducer, upon seeing himself reproached and scorned, will become enraged and will put to death those saints of God. It is then that there will appear the sign of the Son of Man, and he will come upon the clouds of heaven.", ch. XIV, 2-13). The reign of the Son of Perdition in Jerusalem was probably compared with the entrance of Mehmet in Constantinople, whereupon the final victory of God is still to come.

<sup>17</sup> The present translation follows the edition by Tvorogov 2000, 68-69, who reads 'rusi', like M. Casas Olea (2003, 92-93). The mistranslation, however, has found echo in other scholarly works, cf. G. Vernadsky and Pushkarev 1972, vol. 1, 160 or Geanakoplos 1984, 447.

were known among Russians at that time. The sources that have repeatedly been pointed to in the creation of the myth of Moscow as the Third Rome only mention the events of 1453 in a rather oblique way.

## 2. The Myth of Moscow as the Third Rome

In view of the abundant use of the myth of Moscow as the Third Rome in modern historiography, it might be, therefore, surprising to find so little echo in Russian sources of the very historical fact that, theoretically, would have given them such a relevant place in history. Other pieces of evidence traditionally adduced to justify the emergence of this myth have been called into question not only in their very existence, but also in the role they could have developed in the creation of an imperial ideology by the principality of Moscow.

Among the pieces of ‘evidence’ that would have pointed to Moscow as being a natural, rightful heir to the ancient Empire are a few that are systematically repeated by specialists and non-specialists alike as a definitive proof of the existence of what D. Ostrowski has called this ‘historical ghost’ (Ostrowski, 2006). Firstly, in chronological order, a comment made by Zosima, Metropolitan of Moscow, in 1492 in a document addressed to Ivan III (r. 1462-1505), in which he calls the addressee “pious and lover of Christ, Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich, ruler and autocrat of all Rus’, new emperor Constantine of the new city Constantinople-Moscow, and of all the Russian land”. A little bit earlier, the same author has referred to Constantinople (*Tsargrad* in the original Russian, meaning ‘Imperial City’) as New Rome. This reading, as Ostrowski states, was instrumental among scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to see a progression from Rome to Moscow via Constantinople. However, as D. Ostrowski affirms (2006, 171) the reading ‘New Rome’ is only in one of the manuscripts (TSL 46, f. 93v), whereas the others read ‘New Jerusalem’, which is probably the right reading, despite the fact that ‘New Rome’ is the most common epithet of Constantinople in Byzantine sources since its foundation. The reading Jerusalem is also, as we will see, more consistent with Moscow ideology, regardless of whether it was the original reading or modified in the transmission process accordingly. So the difference between the most archaic reading (‘New Rome’) and the others present in later copies (‘New Jerusalem’) could be, in fact, not due to a misreading of the copyist of TSL 46, but, on the contrary, a conscious modification on the part of later copyists, to keep more in line with the official ideology of the ‘New Jerusalem’.

The document in which these laudatory words are dedicated to the tsar

is relevant in itself, since they are included in the new paschal canon (*paskhalia*) that the Metropolitan of Moscow had to compose after the year 7000 from the Creation, when the Second Coming of Christ was supposedly to have happened. They had inherited from Byzantium paschal canons only up to this point, because the end of the world was expected to occur at the end of the seventh millennium. And it did not. Constantinople had fallen, though, and they were not to turn to them for advice. In fact, in 1448 a synod called by the then Prince of Moscow, Vasilii II, had already elected, for the first time, without waiting for Constantinople's response, the Russian Iona as Metropolitan of Rus', thus effectively proclaiming their national Church as autocephalous. For the first time, the Russian church was regulating their own issues from within. The endearing words to the Emperor, as a ruler of Christianity, very much in line with the attributions traditionally given to Byzantine emperors, and so different from those of Western Christian rulers, who depended on the Pope for such issues, are legitimised by the author by tracing the line, not of cities, but of people: first the apostles, then Constantine, then Vladimir I of Kiev, who christened Rus' people, and finally Ivan III, who provides the means for practicing orthodoxy<sup>18</sup>. The idea that the ruler had to be 'equal to the apostles' (ἰσὺ ἀποστόλου) was common in Byzantium from the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Dagron, 1996, p. 153) and also persisted throughout time (Angelov, 2007, 78-102; 357-363; 384-392). The same epithet, translated into East Slavic ('ravnnoapostolnyi') was already applied to Vladimir I, The Saint (Butler, 2002, 70-71).

The very famous words "for two Romes have fallen, a third stands and a fourth will not be" are the creation of Filofei of Pskov, written in the first quarter of the sixteenth century amidst a polemic with a pro-Latin astrologer, Nicholas Bulev. The reading, again, is ambiguous (Ostrowski, 2006, p. 174) but might not necessarily refer to Russia. Finally, another reference in a text by a certain Agathon, inserted in an epilogue of a treaty on paschal canons, dated to 1540, refers specifically to the "magnificent reigning city of New Rome Moscow, mother of cities" (Casas Olea, 2011, p. 97).

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<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, the author does insist on the fact there have only been seven ecumenical councils, the last one to be acknowledged was Nicaea 787 condemning iconoclasm. Once again, as it had been done by Vasilii II, the Council of Florence-Ferrara is fully rejected. The full text of the dedication has been translated into Spanish by M. Casas Olea 2011, 74-77 from the above-mentioned manuscript TSL 49.

All these texts, accurately transmitted or not, had certainly something in common: the role to be played by the ruler as defender of Christianity, as it used to be the prerogative of the Byzantine Emperor (Angelov, 2007, p. 412), the purported place of Moscow in a teleological sacred historiography, and the visceral rejection of the Latin church. Easier as it might be to unify all these complex aspects of imperial ideology under one single label (“Moscow, the Third Rome”), the fact was that they had various and different causes, as well as different manifestations, and most likely would have evolved in the same way had Constantinople fallen or not in 1453. The existence and survival of this myth, or historical ghost, as of any other is directly dependent on its functionality, like any given metaphor: if it fulfils its purpose, if it synthesises complex realities into more simple axioms, it is valid. We have already seen how the echo of the Fall in Russian sources is weak, how the evidence of a self-conscience of imperial continuation in the minds of the immediate contemporaries to the Fall, or even among those who almost a century later were proposed *a posteriori* as makers of such ideology, is flimsy. The question to ask, maybe, is not how the myth was created, with more or less historiographic base, or when, if after the Fall, after the victory of Kazan, etc., but rather why was it at all used, and even it is now, both by Russians and non-Russians alike. As I said before, the reason might be in what does encapsulate, and in this sense, I think its functionality rests upon three main ideas: the sacralisation of the ruler, the firm belief of being God-chosen people and a deep-felt aversion for anything coming from the West. Any modern historian would say that these could as well define the Soviet state. Precisely.

### **3. The Functionality of a Myth**

#### **3.1. The Sacralisation of the Ruler**

The identification of the ruler of Rus’ as a ‘New Constantine’ is an old literary *topos* in Rus’. Already applied to Vladimir I ‘The Saint’ for having Christianised Kievan Rus’ in 988, it was an epithet profusely used in his liturgy as saint once he was canonised (Butler, 2002, p.70). In this equation a few concepts were also implied: not only that it had effectively, from above, changed the religious inclination of his realm, like Constantine had done, but also that it was, in the line with that comfortable but elusive concept of ‘cesaropapism’, in the words of G. Dagrón, an emperor that

pretended to be priest<sup>19</sup>. The attributes of holiness dispensed to Rus' rulers, from the times of the founder of the Moscow lineage, Aleksander Nevskii, were common. He inaugurated a new model of holy prince as defender of Christianity, a holy warrior, a title that would be later applied to Vasiliï II when he rejects the council of Florence<sup>20</sup>. As M. Cherniavsky had already shown (1955, 350-351), contemporary sources to the Council left no doubt as to the fact that it had been the prince who had had to intervene to save Orthodoxy. In both cases, the defence of the Orthodox faith was made against the Latins, not against non-Christians. In line with other Christian rulers, princes of Rus' were therefore presented as putting their armies to the service of the defence of the Christian Orthodox faith, *defensores fidei*, but, unlike their Western counterparts, they kept the privilege of having an opinion over dogmatic questions and calling up synods and councils to regulate the issues of the Church, both questions that had been left in the hands of the Pope for centuries in the west. After the council, called up by Vasiliï II to elect Iona as Metropolitan in 1448, it would also fall on the hands of Ivan IV to summon the Council in Moscow in 1551 that would be known as the Hundred Chapters, issuing the first corpus of canon law not directly inherited from Byzantium. From then until the proclamation of Job as first Patriarch of Moscow in 1589, equating him to other members of the ancient Pentarchy (Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria), the fate of the successive metropolitans was in the hands of the *tsar*: in a hundred years, from 1461 to 1563, out of a total of nine metropolitans, at least five found their relations with the tsar or the court somehow problematic (Gonneau and Lavrov, 2012, 499-501). One aspect, however, that was absent from the idea of Christian Orthodox ruler was the vocation that the Byzantine Emperor always had of being 'ecumenical'. Conscious as they always were of being direct heirs of the *oikumene*, they took into consideration the position of the other members of the Pentarchy (Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem) in their truly universal vocation as rulers of Christendom. That

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<sup>19</sup> Dagron, nevertheless, admits that separation of spheres of power was rigorously maintained both by the Emperor and the Patriarch, except during iconoclasm, in line with the Biblical message "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew, 22, 21). It would be better to speak, then, of a symphony of interests (Dagron 1996, 318). Likewise, this situation seems to have been adopted in Moscow, see Ostrowski 1998, 206-209.

<sup>20</sup> On the religious attributes of princes since Aleksandr Nevskii, see Torres Prieto 2012.

never happened in Rus'. As we shall see, the idea of Orthodoxy was deeply national, circumscribed exclusively to the lands under the dominion of the Gran Prince of Moscow, or the *tsar*. The fate and choices of other nations, however close geographically or historically, were not an issue, from the religious point of view, as long as they were not subject to the authority of the *tsar*. As Antonios of Constantinople had harshly reminded Vasilii I himself in 1395 "it is impossible for Christians to have a Church and not an empire"<sup>21</sup>. Antonios was thinking about all the Christians of the world, and Simeon of Suzdal, on praising Vasilii II, only about "the Russian land".

### 3.2 The New Jerusalem

While the process of sacralisation of the ruler followed more or less the pattern of the Byzantine emperor, this fact in itself does not necessarily imply that the territory was modelled upon the Eastern empire. In terms of the administration of the realm, Moscow was more indebted to the Golden Horde than it ever was to the court at Constantinople<sup>22</sup>. While the stress has always been put on finding parallels between Rus' and the Eastern Empire, which were probably more effective in Kievan Rus' than from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, various specialists have turned their eyes to Jerusalem as a model for imperial ideology in Moscow. In a classic article, D. Rowland (1996) showed how, in many respects, the ideology in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Moscow was closer to the classic Old Testament formulation 'temple-land-monarchy' present in the books of the Prophets than to any late Roman or Hellenistic formulation<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, the rulers of Moscow were often equated to David or Solomon, Moscow was often

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<sup>21</sup> The sentence is quoted in Cherniavsky 1955, 356, and the letter of Antonios in which is included is translated into English in Geanakoplos 1984, 143-144. It is apparently a response to a letter from Vasilii I in which he put into question the authority of the Emperor while accepting the authority of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

<sup>22</sup> On the various aspects in which Muscovy was indebted to the Mongols, see Ostrowski 1998, especially 36-63; 164-198 and, on the 'Third Rome' myth, 219-243.

<sup>23</sup> On the political ideas of the Old Testament and, particularly, a detailed analysis of the different forms of messianic thought in the context of Antiquity, see Nemo 1998, 637-710. On the various medieval and modern uses of the idea of 'New Israel', particularly focusing on its use in the Frankish kingdom, see M. Garrison, 2000.

called 'New Jerusalem' and, as M. Flier has also shown (2006, 387-408), rites and architecture policies aimed at reflecting a New Jerusalem. This idea, of course, was one that could only be developed retrospectively, not at the time, for example, of the Fall of Constantinople. Interestingly enough, the Byzantine imperial ideology had also shifted towards Jerusalem after the sacking of the City in 1204 by the Crusaders, particularly during the Empire of Nicaea, in exile, and after the recapturing of the City by Michael VIII (Angelov, 2007, 98-101). Only after certain historical events could the idea of being God's chosen people become political ideology, and the disastrous events of 1453 were only one of the signs, and maybe not the most important one. Alongside the Fall of Constantinople, other clues could have been relevant: Serbia and Bulgaria, Orthodox realms like Moscow, had definitely fallen under the Turks, the Mongols had returned to the East, the other principalities in what once had been Kievan Rus' had disappeared or were in rapid decline. And if all this has happened and the Lord has rewarded them, it must have been because Moscow had done something that had pleased the Lord, because they, and only they had kept the Covenant, as the prophets of the Old Testament said. The rejection of the Council of Florence-Ferrara could easily be that 'something'.

### 3.3 The animosity towards the Latins

One of the reasons that might explain the lack of interest in Moscow on the fate of the City that only a few centuries before had marvelled the Rus' delegation, so much so that, according to the *Povest' vremennykh let*, the founding chronicle of the Kievan Rus', such grandeur had convinced them that they must be the believers in the true God, and therefore accepted Christianity, was probably to be found in the Council of Florence-Ferrara of 1439.

The open rejection in Moscow towards anything that had to do with the Roman Church, the 'Latins', had already started when Aleksander Nevskii, father of the founder of the Moscow dynasty, Daniil Aleksandrovich, had to fight the Swedes at the river Neva in 1240 and then the Teutonic Knights at Lake Chud in 1242. To a certain extent, Moscow's anti-Latin feeling was twofold: one, for having had Roman armies threatening their lands; and two, for mirroring the anti-Latin polemic already present in Constantinople that was directly imported in Church literature.

The tension between the Old and New Rome had been made evident already from the times of the schism in 1054 and only increased in the



years thereafter. The siege and sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the eventual regaining of the City by Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261 did most certainly contribute to harvesting mutual animosity<sup>24</sup>. In both sides condemnation of the other's practices and suspicion on their ulterior motives abounded. Nevertheless, the Emperors in exile, in the empire of Nicaea, John III Vatatzes and Theodore II Laskaris, did foster contacts between Latin and Greek church representatives, perhaps already poignantly aware of the bigger menace that the Turks implied. The death of pope Clement IV in 1269, belligerently anti-Byzantine, permitted the election of Gregory X in 1272, who, in agreement with the Byzantine emperor, Michael VIII Palaiologos, saw the Muslims as a greater threat and announced a general council that would finally impose rules for both western and eastern churches to respect. Similar attempts were made by the Emperor in the newly regained City, but faced the opposition of numerous bishops and monks, apart from the Patriarch Joseph himself, who could not easily forget the desecration and occupation of churches and monasteries not so long ago. Two points were considered unacceptable by the Eastern clerics: the Latin wording of the Creed (the so-called *filioque* controversy) and the recognition of Rome its primacy over the other Churches of the Pentarchy. The meeting of delegates of both churches that took place in Lyons in 1274 included these questions in their debates, apart from the awkward question of Purgatory. The three Byzantine delegates (George Akropolites, former Patriarch Germanos III and Archbishop Theophanes of Nicaea) finally swore loyalty to the Pope and agreed to the Roman version of the Creed, whereas the question of the Purgatory remained open, for the moment.

While the Roman Church thought it had obtained a victory over the whole Orthodox Church, the acceptance of the Emperor Michael VIII himself and of his high officials, Church and Government ones, was certainly not binding for the rest of the Empire, and certainly not for the Orthodox Church. At the end, none of the parties obtained what they had aimed for: Michael VIII soon demanded Rome permission to go back to the wording of the Creed previous to the Schism, despite finally accepting the existence of Purgatory; furthermore, Gregory X died before being able to put into practice an army of joint forces to launch a Crusade against the Infidel, leaving the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII without the help he had sought to obtain. When Michael VIII died eight years after the

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<sup>24</sup> As D. Angelov has shown (2007, 418-419).

Council, the next Emperor repudiated the Union in 1285. The attempt had lasted more or less the lifetime of their prime movers.

The critics to such union on both sides amounted to more than the three critical points mentioned above (primacy of Rome, rewording of the Creed and the existence of Purgatory): aside from particular dietary requirements, the Eastern clerics could not understand the usage of unleavened bread in the Eucharist by Romans, the celibacy by Roman priests, naming the Theotokos ‘Santa Maria’, as if she were only another saint and not the Mother of God, using whole hand or two fingers, instead of three, representing the Trinity, to cross themselves from the other side. In contrast, the Westerns did not understand the veneration of icons by Byzantines, their resistance to genuflexion and even the lack of Aristotelian based arguments in theological discussions. Another final, not minor aspect, of the Liturgy, kept them apart: the Latins discovered in Constantinople that Consecration is followed in Eastern churches by an invocation (*epiklesis*) to the Holy Ghost, which for the Latins was against the dogma, since it was the words pronounced by Christ, and these alone, as St. Thomas Aquinas had stated, that allowed transubstantiation.

Despite more efforts in the decades to come, even the ephemeral conversion of Emperor John V Palaiologos in 1399 to Catholicism and the intervention of Christian military forces led by Serbia against the Turks, which were finally defeated at Marica in 1371, the distance between both Churches about these issues did not grow smaller. When Thessalonike fell in 1430, Constantinople found itself surrounded by Turks from the East as well as from the West. In a last desperate attempt John VIII Palaiologos attempted again, and this will be the last time, to reunite the churches. In 1438 he led a delegation of more than 700 people to Ferrara to meet the Papal party. Among these were two people worth mentioning: Mark Eugenikos of Ephesos, clearly opposed to the demands of Rome, whose brother, John Eugenikos would compose a *threnos* about the Fall very critical to Westerners and soon translated into Slavic (cf. *supra*), and the Metropolitan of the Russian Church (1437-1442), Isidore of Kiev, clearly favourable to the Union, who was immediately incarcerated by Vasili II when he arrived back in Moscow<sup>25</sup>. He would be, in fact, the last Metropolitan of Russia appointed by Byzantium. The same issues that had been treated in Lyons almost two-hundred years before were placed on the table once again, although one issue would have a long impact in the

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<sup>25</sup> See Cherniavsky 1955 for details of life and perceptions of his ‘betrayal’ in Russian sources, mainly by Simeon of Suzdal.

history of Christianity: Rome's insistence of being acknowledged as superior to other members of the Pentarchy before the union of Churches stretched the patience of the Eastern delegates. In 1443, only four years after the bull *Larentur caeli* proclaiming the Union of Churches, the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem disavowed it.

Moscow was certainly aware of the differences between both Churches, and in the polemical literature against what was called the heresy of the 'Judaizers' at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, whether these were really Jews or Catholics using unleavened bread, the accusations were similar to those found the Byzantium against Latins<sup>26</sup>. Despite the official acceptance by the Emperor and his officials of the resolutions of the Council, the people were certainly not supportive of the idea, and so it is reflected, as we have seen, in non-official sources, permeated with anti-Latin feelings. It has been traditionally attributed to grand admiral Lukas Notaras having said, before the Fall, "better the Turkish turban than the Papal tiara", thus echoing the words of Patriarch Michael III (1170-1178) to Emperor Manuel I Komnenos "I would rather have the Muslim as my material lord rather than the Latin as my spiritual one".

#### 4. Conclusion

On December 12, 1452, compelled by Pope Nicholas V, Constantine XI, last Emperor of the Romans, solemnly proclaimed the Union of Churches in Santa Sophia, against the recommendation of the fifteen members of a council of experts – five metropolitans among them –, appointed *ad hoc* by the Emperor himself. Alongside the Emperor were Patriarch Gregorios and the now Catholic cardinal Isidore, former Metropolitan of Moscow, as representative of the Holy See. That very day, an incensed mob ran to the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople to ask Gennadios (Georgios Scholarios), whose mentor had been Mark Eugenikos, what was there to do. This brilliant philosopher and theologian, advocate of Aristotelian philosophy and deeply knowledgeable of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, nailed his answer to the door of his cell: "O unhappy Romans, why have you forsaken the truth? Why do you not trust in God, instead of in the Latins? In losing your faith you will lose your city" (Geanakoplos 1984, 388). For him, if the Latins saved the City, they would have to accept the resolutions of the Council of Florence, something

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<sup>26</sup> See Martin 1995, 259-262; Poliakov 1989, 29-32; Herrin 2007, 303-304; Geanakoplos, 1984, 202-225.

that had already been unacceptable for his mentor. The only thing to do, therefore, was what the monks of Mount Athos had done when the prince of Thessalonike had asked the Venetians for help against the Turks: handing themselves to the Turks. Gennadios was captured and freed by Mehmet II and subsequently appointed Patriarch by him. In 1484, the four Greek Patriarchs rejected the Council of Florence and all its decisions.

Moscow, in the meantime, had already started to walk its own path. The Fall of Constantinople was probably of very little relevance to the construction of their imperial ideology. Many of the concepts that had been encapsulated in the metaphor of the “Third Rome”, because it cannot amount to much more than that, were already present in Byzantine sources: the idea of the ruler as a *defensor fidei*, the aversion towards the Latins, considered heretics and treacherous, the need to claim a pre-Rome biblical legitimacy, going back to the times of the Temple, the idea that the Fall of Constantinople was a punishment from God for accepting Papal authority. All that was there, and much more as well. The decision of the Moscow rulers not to take part in the politics of the Eastern Empire implied probably exactly what it means: that they, least than anyone, wanted to be identified with an ancient empire, rundown and exhausted, to which nothing tied them anymore, they aspired to something better, they aspired to become the New Jerusalem.



**V.**

**LEGAL AND SOCIAL FRONTIERS  
ON THE EASTERN EMPIRE**

FROM *VETUS BYZANTIUM* (AMM. 22.8.8)  
TO *URBS REGIA*:  
REPRESENTATION OF CONSTANTINOPLE  
IN LATE ROMAN EMPIRE LAWS

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## 1. Introduction

As it is widely known, during the reign of Valentinian I and Valens, the Roman world is fragmented into two *pars imperii*. In this sense, the phenomenon of the division of the Empire, which could be foreseen since the days of the Tetrarchy, though still informally, is confirmed at the time of the above-mentioned emperors<sup>1</sup>. However, it was not until the death of Theodosios I in January of the year 395 that such partition became a reality not only *de facto* but also *de iure*, the division of the Empire effectively becomes thus a recognized reality, although it still tends to retain the appearance of unity<sup>2</sup>.

Closely linked to this fragmentation of imperial territory is the question of multiplication of imperial residences, as a result of the historical need to meet the increasingly numerous emergencies at the borders, which caused that, since the second century A.D., the emperor travelled continuously<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> About this, Pergami 1993. Generally, on the fragmentation of the Empire, De Dominicis 1954; Palanque 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of this are the documents of bureaucratic character of the *Notitia Dignitatum* or the same issue of the *Codex Theodosianus*. About the first question *vid.* Neira Faleiro 2005. In reference to the time of the Theodosian compilation, Atzeri 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Millar 1977, 28-40. As indicated, the emperor was the image of the State and to assert itself on the throne, it was advisable that was openly visible. From this point of view the trip became an important technique of propaganda, circumstances

Such circumstances attest at the same time to the growing importance of certain urban centres as places of residence and different government *Augusti*, particularly noticeable from the fourth century and, ultimately, as a result of the absence of stable imperial headquarters, especially in the west, where the dispersion of power will become even more notorious<sup>4</sup>.

Among these headquarters of power we have referred to, in the fourth century and in the *pars Orientis*, the city founded by Constantine on the seat of the ancient city of Byzantium in May of the year 330 begins to emerge. From that date onwards, Constantinople becomes one of the cities competing with Rome for primacy in the direction of the Empire, culminating during the reign of Theodosios I, moment in which the city of the Bosphorus becomes the undisputed centre of the Late Roman Empire, as it is quite clear from the analysis of the *subscriptions* of imperial constitutions preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus*, showing that over 240 laws had been issued from Constantinople at that time<sup>5</sup>, out of a total of more than 600 included in this compilation, which were enacted from Constantinople -Fig. 1-. Accordingly, whereas, as we pointed out, the Roman west is characterised in this era by a multiplicity of centres of power, there is no doubt that the so-called *Nea Rhome* (Soc. *H.E.* 1.16)<sup>6</sup> concentrates undisputedly the management of the *pars Orientis*, which could also be attested through in the extremely laudatory vocabulary with which begins to be characterised in legislation.

In short, in a period of only 50 years (that is, from 330, date of its foundation, to 381, when it becomes residence of Theodosios I) Constantinople assumes a main role as headquarters for political and

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resulting in the emergence of urban centres as alternatives to the same Rome imperial residences. In this sense, Coriat, 1997, 179 and 184-192.

<sup>4</sup> In general on the question of cities that acted as imperial residence in Late Antiquity, *vid.* Ripoll López-Gurt Esparraguera, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> After his death in January 395 his successors, starting with his own son Arkadios, maintained it as the only imperial residence in the *pars Orientis*, at least until the seventh century, moment in which Herakleios, without renouncing to the capital of Constantinople, revisits the custom of personally directing military operations in campaign, which will force him to leave the city. In this respect, Ward-Perkins 2000, 64.

<sup>6</sup> With regard to the terminology of *Nea Rhome* / *Nova Roma* the use of this term in reference to Constantinople is made official for the first time in the third canon of the Council of Constantinople of the year 381, achieving a great civil, ideological and political significance. In this respect, Vallejo Girvés 2004; Dagon 1984, 454-487; Joannou 1962, 47.



ideological power of the Empire, being analogous to Rome<sup>7</sup>, when not openly demanding for itself a preference over the Latium's capital<sup>8</sup>. Official documentation, such as imperial constitutions, leaves no room for doubt<sup>9</sup>, but the same does not happen if we analyse other types of sources, such as the works of different Latin authors of the second half of 4<sup>th</sup> century, in which Rome is still presented as the nerve centre of the Empire, ignoring the role of Constantinople and even undermining and belittling it<sup>10</sup>. Our intention, therefore, is that, by contrasting the reality emerging from a literary production that clearly shows both the official tone and will of the state, such as the imperial constitutions, and particularly focusing on encomiastic vocabulary and protocol tone used in relation to contemporary power centres, we would be able to corroborate the emergence of a new hierarchy of cities where the city bearing the name of Constantine occupies a preponderant role, or at least equivalent in relevance to Rome itself.

Before, we would like to point out several questions. First, we understand that the legislation contained in compilations such as *Codex*

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<sup>7</sup> Since the end of the fourth century, as mentioned, the former association “Rome-Emperor”, putting emphasis on the identification of the prosperity of the Empire with the continuity of the ancient capital and with who ruled it, was giving way to “Rome-Constantinople” society, and later the “Constantinople-Emperor”. In this respect MacCormack 1975.

<sup>8</sup> In any case, and from a legal point of view, it will share with Rome, the capital of the Empire, among other things, institutions, such as the Senate and *praefectus urbis*, as well as prestige and fame. The same nomenclature used in the literature of the time and in legislative documentation, as we will have the opportunity to analyse, would confirm this impression, since certain epithets apply exclusively to Rome and Constantinople, city as well as Eastern capital. Added to this, was its condition of leadership of the Roman world, in particular after the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in the year 476. See, Ward-Perkins 2000, 64.

<sup>9</sup> Proof of this is already at *CTh* 2.8.19 posted on the year 389 in Rome by *Valentinianus, Theodosius et Arcadius AAA.*, referring to working days for the administration of justice and legal processes, including a mention to those who had to be considered as holidays, counting among others the birthdays of Rome and Constantinople: *Omnes dies iubemus esse iuridicos. Illos tantum manere feriarum dies fas erit... His adicimus natalicios dies urbium maximarum Romae et Constantinopolis...* (Th. Mommsen ed., Wiedmann, Hildesheim 1990).

<sup>10</sup> In the first circumstance they would be, for example, Ausonius and Ammianus Marcellinus, and in the second Eutropius and Claudianus. So it happens that Eutropius alluded to it in terms of *Romae aemula* (*Brev.* 10.8.1) and Claudianus describes her as *magnae Romulae aemula* (*In Rufinus* 2.54).

*Theodosianus*, post-Theodosian *Leges Novellae* and *Codex Iustinianus*<sup>11</sup> has an undeniable value of propaganda at the time as external manifestation of the will of imperial authority<sup>12</sup>. To be sure, the aforementioned propaganda aim is not the original *raison d'être* of imperial constitutions, but it is also undeniable that they eventually became transmitters of imperial ideology in Late Antiquity. Good examples of this are the modes and forms used in describing the government of the *Augustus*, either by highlighting his favour and protection for the weak, his persecution and condemnation of abuse of power or corruption, or by introducing direct references to civil and moral virtues characterising him, by means of using a distinctly encomiastic lexicon, similar to that used in imperial panegyrics of epideictic style.

Secondly, which should not surprise us, this vocabulary, present in urban areas and at an official level, marks the existence of a specific hierarchy, highlighting the creation of a new geography of power<sup>13</sup>. In this sense, we witness an evolution that leads from the gradual abandonment of a criterion based on possession or not possession of specific legal city statutes – as the *municipium* or *colonia* –, which was marked by joint collaboration of principles of various kinds to underline its privilege situation<sup>14</sup>, to other criteria, which now tie the association of urban centres to a lexicon of strong character and honorary content clinching a relative hierarchy between cities.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In reference to *Codex Theodosianus* we use the edition of Th. Mommsen in Wiedmann, Hildesheim 1990. About *Novellae*, Th. Mommsen-P. M. Meyer in Weidmann, Hildesheim 1990. Finally about *Codex Iustinianus*, Krueger in Weidmann, Hildesheim 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Not in vain in many imperial laws the verbal form adopted by the emperors to proclaim his decrees, orders and decisions is none other than *volumus*.

<sup>13</sup> We must consider that the Roman world since its birth, as so many other societies of antiquity, tends to the construction of a strong vertical stratification which defines and points out differences between its components.

<sup>14</sup> In terms of appearance and need for this hierarchical organisation Cracco-Ruggini, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Although since the Early Empire it is cultivated in Rome a leading literature to express praise to the considered main urban centres, emphasising aspects such as its monuments and its political and cultural importance, it was not usually done, however, by using laudatory and honorary vocabulary, as that discussed here. In any case, the praise to the city is a phenomenon known since the times of Augustus, sinking its roots in Hellenistic tradition. In this respect Desanges 1994; Aujac 1994.

So, as a result of the gradual Romanization of the conquered territories, and in particular from the Edict of Caracalla in the year 212 (*Dig.* 1.5.17), extending Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire<sup>16</sup>, the old legally-based stratification between towns that was in place, was becoming void of content until it lost its meaning<sup>17</sup>. Due to the uniformity of institutional structures and legal statutes of the cities<sup>18</sup>, it became necessary to determine by other means the role played by urban centres, which had just emerged through the implementation of specific vocabulary according to the importance attached to each city, and all this with a clear connotation of propaganda and ultimately also protocol<sup>19</sup>. In this way, a rhetorical code was being constructed that will be present in the literary documents of the time, and therefore, in the legal ones, with the added particularity that in the latter, in which were are more interested, in addition, such code would possess an official character.

Moreover, the association of cities with an increasingly bombastic vocabulary, is a phenomenon shared with other elements of Late Roman Empire. Features of this vocabulary can be thus equally perceived in the way and form public servants of the high administration of the Late Roman Empire are referred to and treated<sup>20</sup>, a matter that has been widely

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<sup>16</sup> About this measure included in the *Digesta* *vid.* Mastino 1984; Segré 1966.

<sup>17</sup> A similar phenomenon occurs with the concept of *civis*, being remarkable the mention of the *civis Romanus* in imperial constitutions, preferring instead the use of concepts devoid of legal content, such as *populus* or *provinciales*, considerations resulting as a last consequence of the progressive uniformity of the territory. In relation to the binomial “citizenship-Roman law” in the period of Late Antiquity, *vid.* Garnsey 2004. In reference to the heading in the imperial constitutions of *populus* and *provinciales*, Cañizar Palacios 2010.

<sup>18</sup> With regard to the progressive legal equality between urban centres Lepelley 2001a; Lepelley 2001b.

<sup>19</sup> So, the prominence of certain cities has become paralleled to the organisation of the Late Roman Empire State, so Rome and Constantinople are identified with urban centres that, by hierarchical pre-eminence, resemble the condition of the *Augusti*, being for the same reason Alexandria and Trier equated to the category of the *Caesares*. In this respect Dagron 1984, 59.

<sup>20</sup> It is the case of expressions and words of the type *excellens auctoritas*, *praeclsa auctoritas*, *sublimissima praefectura*, *magnifica auctoritas*, *sublimis magnitudo*, *praeclsa sinceritas*, *sublimis magnificentia*, *eminentissimus*, *magnificentissima sedis*, ...

studied<sup>21</sup>, unlike the changes undergone in the language characterising urban centres, which duly focus our attention<sup>22</sup>.

Finally, it is not surprising that in official documentation, such as imperial constitutions, certain urban centres also deserve an honorific treatment because, if, as we affirm, emperors were recipients and subject matter in the acts themselves, why wouldn't be equally so their sites of power? Hence, the highly encomiastic vocabulary that accompanies them, in particular Rome and Constantinople. In the first case, due to the veneration and respect that the city still represented —although such circumstance occurs in a historical context in which it would have ceased to be both imperial residence of Western emperors<sup>23</sup>, as well as nucleus of the said Empire; and in the second, based on the role played by the new Rome, which begins to replace the city of the Tiber in its main role.

In any case, the association of urban centres with a recharged useful vocabulary to distinguish the importance of each other in a given territory should be highlighted, as it is something also previously attested in other documentary sources from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, being the most emblematic example the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, of anonymous authorship and dated to the time of Constantius II<sup>24</sup>. In it, alongside the term *civitas*, there are epithets of encomiastic nature, for example, *admirabilis*, *bona*, *eminens*, *excellens*, *gloriosa*, *maximum*, *optima*, *regalis* or *splendida*, all of them linked with a wide range of cities, the majority located in the East of the Empire, probably due to a greater knowledge of this region by its author<sup>25</sup>, who has been associated with a dealer that had developed his activity, particularly in the Syrian-Palestinian area<sup>26</sup>. By means of this nomenclature, an urban hierarchy is constructed in this work, in which terms like *splendida* or *maximum* serve to identify relevant towns in a

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<sup>21</sup> Mathisen 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Note that, with respect to the diversity of names referring to Rome and Constantinople, Antonio Carile highlighted the existence of a different set of expressions from the work of sixth century historian Evagrius Scholastikos. In this respect Carile 2002, 57, note 27.

<sup>23</sup> Maxentius (306-312) was the last emperor who chose Rome as his seat of power. From this moment, it was “une capitale sans empereurs” (Lançon 1995, 9).

<sup>24</sup> In this case we will use the edition of J. Rougé, and where his composition finishes in the middle of the fourth century, taking into account a passage which refers to Constantius II in terms of *Dominus orbis terrarum, imperator Constantius* (*Expositio* 28). About this, Rougé 1966, 9-26.

<sup>25</sup> Martelli 1982, 93 and 124.

<sup>26</sup> Rougé 1966, 27-38.

region, reserving others, such as *regalis*, to indicate the maximum relevance, as it would be the case of Rome and Antioch.

In view of this, it is not in itself such an extraordinary phenomenon. What is truly significant is finding this nomenclature in an official document, such as imperial constitutions.

## 2. The depiction of Constantinople and Rome in Latin authors of the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century

If we take into consideration, therefore, only the vocabulary employed in relation to Rome and Constantinople in the works of Latin authors of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, such as Ammianus Marcellinus, Symmachus, Ausonius and Rutilius Namatianus, it would give the impression that the ancient capital of the Empire retains its primacy. However, we cannot ignore the fact that pagan writers, clung to the purest Roman tradition and with a great ideological attachment to the traditional postulates of Rome, were reluctant to assume changes in the Empire and to admit that Rome, despite being described as *aeterna*<sup>27</sup>, *domina et regina* (Amm. 14.6.6), *prima inter urbes* (Aus. *Ordo* 1), *patria communis*<sup>28</sup> or *mundi mater* (Rut. 2.60), or characterised with highly encomiastic terms, such as *augustissima* (Amm. 16.10.20), *sacratissima* (Amm. 27.3.3), *venerabilis* (Amm. 22.16.12) or *inclita* (Aus. *Ordo* 164), had irremediably lost its old role in favour of the city of Bosphorus. Thus, the depiction presented of Constantinople, usually unnoticeable, when not practically indifferent or avoided, excluding the use of any kind of complimentary language associated with it, contrasts greatly with the information derived from the imperial constitutions, where the role of the *Nea Roma* is not only obvious, but, compared to Rome, it will become, as we will see, even insulting<sup>29</sup>. So, while veneration towards Rome persists in laws, and it is

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<sup>27</sup> Amm. 14.6.1, 15.7.1 and 10, 19.10.1, 21.12.24, 22.9.3, 23.1.4, 25.10.5, 26.3.1, 28.1.1,36 and 56 and 29.6.17; Symm. *Ep.* 3.55 and 9.148 and Symm. *Rel.* 3.54 (61), 14.26 (34), 18.31 (38) and 37.50 (57).

<sup>28</sup> Symm. *Ep.* 5.84 (82), 5.85 (83), 5.87 (85) and 6.15 (16).

<sup>29</sup> We have to clarify that, in the *Codex Theodosianus* there is, from the year 380, a clear predominance of Roman constitutions originated in the East, which also explains the greater role and consideration of Constantinople. Added to this is the very oriental origin of this compilation of imperial laws, which continues in the post-theodosian *Leges Novellae* and the *Codex Iustinianus*.

thus reflected in the encomiastic appellations it receives<sup>30</sup>, at the same time, it can be observed that, in imperial constitutions, Constantinople also deserves an honorific treatment, equating it progressively to the former capital of the Empire, and even surpassing it.

Rome, therefore, retains in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and during the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a privileged position in literary documents of the time, since it was the symbol of everything representing what we can identify as “civilization”, becoming a cultural and identity expression of what it meant to the Roman Empire<sup>31</sup>. So, it is not surprising that Latin writers, as those listed above, continued showing the prominence of the city of the Tiber in their literary compositions<sup>32</sup>, at the same time as they seem oblivious to a new reality marked by the importance of Constantinople<sup>33</sup>, observed especially in the vocabulary used in depicting either city. This is a contrasting feature with respect to what we see in the legal material.

Therefore, and in order to identify the phenomenon of which we speak, we shall discuss the lexicon used in the literary production of these authors, starting with Ammianus.

## 2.1 Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>34</sup>

The first point to be made is that Ammianus sought nothing else than telling the historical evolution of the Roman Empire, composing his work in Rome and for Rome, so, in this sense, it should be no surprise that,

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<sup>30</sup> Such circumstances should also be closely related to each historical context. Thus, for example, in legislation issued by Valentinian I, it is likely to eventually underline in the legal text Rome’s *aeternitas*, which should be linked to the emergence of a new dynasty of emperors and their need to gain a foothold in the throne, and what better way than proclaiming something as traditional as the eternity of the ancient capital.

<sup>31</sup> About this conceptual evolution in which Rome loses its political prominence, but retains instead its status in cultural terms, see Frusco 2001.

<sup>32</sup> A clear example of this are the words with which Ausonius closes his *Ordo urbium nobilium*, and which regards Rome as *inclita* (Aus. *Ordo* 164) and defines it as that which is above all the homelands, that is, common to all homeland (Aus. *Ordo* 166: *haec (Burgidala) patria est, patrias sed Roma supervenit omnes*). In reference to Ausonius we handle the editing of R.P.H. Green 2003.

<sup>33</sup> The invisibility of Constantinople is, moreover, a topic studied in relation to other sources of the time, for example, the *Historia Augusta*. To this respect Chastagnol 1997.

<sup>34</sup> We will use the edition of W. Seyfarth, BSB B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, Leipzig 1978.

firstly, prominence was granted to Rome and, secondly, that he continues to underline its central role in the Roman world. Accordingly, the epithets used emphasise this main role: use of *urbs* synonymously with Rome (Amm. 14.6.19, 16.10.5,14 and 16, 27.3.2, 28.1.6, 28.4.3 and 28.6.24), references to its condition of *aeterna* (Amm. 14.6.1, 15.7.1 and 10, 19.10.1, 21.12.24, 22.9.3, 23.1.4, 25.10.5, 26.3.1, 28.1.1,36 and 56 and 29.6.17), its identification with the headquarters of the Empire and will every single virtue (Amm. 14.6.23 and 16.10.13)<sup>35</sup>, its description as *venerabilis* (Amm. 22.16.12), *augustissima* (Amm. 16.10.20) and *sacratissima* (Amm. 27.3.3), its condition of *templum mundi totius* (Amm. 17.4.13)<sup>36</sup> and of *domina et regina* (Amm. 14.6.6). Additionally, detailed descriptions of its architecture and monuments (Amm. 16.10) and another instance in which Rome is said to be protected by two elements of religious character such as the *Virtus* and *Fortuna* (Amm. 14.6.3), thus focusing also in its spiritual primacy<sup>37</sup>. Eventually, this type of epithets would highlight Rome's political importance and alternative credit, valued as honourable<sup>38</sup>.

In short, the Antiochian writer reflects thus admiration for Rome and its representation<sup>39</sup>, attempting a return to an old more purely Roman fashion. But his *Res Gestae* was written in the last quarter of the fourth century, during the reign of Theodosios I<sup>40</sup>, this is, in a historic moment dominated abroad by the increasing pressure of barbaric peoples and, inside the Empire, *inter alia*, by the loss of importance of the Tiber city; in other words, in a context that put into question both the continuity of the Empire and Rome's very hegemony, which, at that moment rests in fact in Constantinople, the real receptor of the Roman world, and not in Rome. However, as we have detailed elsewhere<sup>41</sup>, such circumstance leaves no

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<sup>35</sup> In the first instance is named *caput mundi* and in the second *imperii virtutumque omnium larem*.

<sup>36</sup> Referring to this last aspect, that Rome would be identified with the symbolic body of the whole Empire, Harrison 1999.

<sup>37</sup> For the analysis and interpretation of these two concepts *vid.* Mané 1989; Matthews 1986; Blockley 1975, 168-176.

<sup>38</sup> In relation to the representation of Rome as a symbol of the values estimated as honourable *vid.* Camus, 1967, 124 and ff.

<sup>39</sup> Not in vain, the Greek is his mother tongue but he writes the *Res Gestae* in Latin.

<sup>40</sup> As for the date of composition of his work, *vid.* Harto Trujillo, 2002, 19; Alonso Núñez, 1975, 51-54.

<sup>41</sup> Cañizar Palacios, 2011.

trace in his work, on the contrary, it is minimised, so the association of Constantinople with a laudatory terminology is practically null: it is only called once *vetus Byzantium* (Amm. 22.8.8), referring to her next as *civitas Constantinopolitana* (Amm. 26.7.4).

If that were the sole purpose of Ammianus' work, perhaps we could think it is something purely incidental, but not so much in view of the fact that he did not suppress this honorary lexicon when describing other cities, such as Aquileia (Amm. 21.11.2: *uberem situ et opibus murisque circumdatam validis*), Beryto (Amm. 14.8.9: *urbs decorata magna et pulchra*), Burdigala (Amm. 15.11.13: *amplitudo civitas*), Antiochia (Amm. 14.8.8 and 22.9.14: *mundo cognita civitas cui non certauerit alia aduectiis ita affluere copiis et internis* and *orientis apicem pulchrum*, respectively), Hadrianopolis (Amm. 27.4.12: *civitas maxima*), Alexandria (Amm. 22.16.7: *vertex omnium est civitatum*), Apamea (Amm. 14.8.8: *florentissima*), Mauritanian Caesarea (Amm. 29.5.18: *urbem opulentam quondam et nobilem*), Palestinian Caesarea (Amm. 14.8.11: *civitas egregia*), Nicomedia (Amm. 22.9.3: *urbs antehac inclita*), Treveris (Amm. 15.11.9: *domicilium principum clarum*).<sup>42</sup> In conclusion it is evident that Ammianus ignores the prominence of Constantinople and insists on introducing Rome to us as the capital of the Empire<sup>43</sup>.

## 2.2 Ausonius

The question is not much different in the case of the rhetoric of the Burdigala. If anything, the big news is that in his *Ordo urbium nobilium*, composed equally in times of Theodosios I<sup>44</sup>, in the hierarchy of cities established, he gives Constantinople an important role, although, unlike what happens in the case of other urban centres, it is not linked with an encomiastic lexicon. Specifically, he places the city of Constantine, and Carthage too, in second place, after *prima inter urbes, divum domus, aurea*

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<sup>42</sup> Not only the use of such language shows the lack of importance given to Constantinople. Accordingly, also other omissions to it in Ammianus' works, as the reference to the burial place of Emperor Julian, or the mention of the transportation and erection of an obelisk in Rome. About that *vid.* Kelly 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Regarding this aspect *vid.* Bastos Marques, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> It is usually dated after the death of the usurper Magnus Maximus in the year 388. In fact, when it comes to the city of Aquileia, he refers to this character (Aus. *Ordo* 70-72), affirming that the recent past of the city, this is, when it became headquarters of the usurper, motivates its lower esteem (Aus. *Ordo* 64-65).



*Roma* (Aus. *Ordo* 1) and before other urban centres certainly relevant, such as Antiochia, Alexandria, Treveris or Mediolanum.

Apart from this consideration, the same title of Ausonius' work underlines the importance conferred then to abandoning the construction of a hierarchical classification among cities<sup>45</sup>, being in this sense an outstanding contribution to the question of the evolution of the political centrality at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, as it has been stated<sup>46</sup>, the ready-made hierarchy should be interpreted properly, so that it would not reflect the true situation at the time, but only the claim of the Gallic rhetorician to point out the importance, past or present, of certain towns, using different strategies to highlight them, which was the case of imperial residences, their fame and their cultural and economic relevance<sup>47</sup>. It must be added that his *Ordo* shows the existence of an imbalance between information relating to cities of west and east<sup>48</sup>. Due to this, we should not grant excessive importance to the shown order of cities<sup>49</sup>, since it would only partially reflect the reality of the time.

In any circumstances, cities mentioned are usually included in other sources from the same period, such as, for instance, the above-mentioned *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, where they are associated with honorific and laudatory vocabulary. Furthermore, it is equally true that Ausonius does not excel in the employment of this lexicon, although he used it to glorify certain urban centres, among which, however, again it is not Constantinople, whose most relevant feature is its recent Fortune (Aus. *Ordo* 6). So Rome, in addition to occupying the first place among cities, is described as *divum domus* and *aurea* (Aus. *Ordo* 1), *rerum domina* (Aus. *Ordo* 54), and defined also as *caput* and *inclita* (Aus. *Ordo* 164) and

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<sup>45</sup> In this sense, the influence exerted by the work of Ausonius is to be highlighted, both in the structure and composition of other literary sources of the time, such as Prudentius' *Peristephanon*. In this regard Gutilla 2006, 129, estimates that Prudentius produces a hierarchy of Hispanic cities, headed by Caesaraugusta, based on the preservation of martyrs' relics. From this point of view, it would be a Christian response to the construction of the hierarchy of cities created by the pagan Ausonius, who nevertheless inspired him (p. 141).

<sup>46</sup> Green 2003, 570.

<sup>47</sup> In that sense, they may be political in nature, as in the case of Constantinople; hence, he places it second, or Carthage (Aus. *Ordo* 2-14); or of purely laudatory nature, case of Trier (Aus. *Ordo* 28-34); moral nature, as in the case of Alexandria and Antioch (Aus. *Ordo* 15-27); affective nature, as in the case of his place of birth, Burdigala (Aus. *Ordo* 128-168).

<sup>48</sup> Reboul 2007, 109-110.

<sup>49</sup> Nicolet 2000a, 245.

estimated as exceeding all homelands (Aus. *Ordo* 166: *patrias sed Roma supervenit omnes*). Furthermore Treveris is accompanied by the term *solium urbis* (Aus. *Ordo* 29), Capua is described as *potens* (Aus. *Ordo* 46) and as *Romae aemula* (Aus. *Ordo* 49), Aquileia is *clara* (Aus. *Ordo* 65), *celeberrima* (Aus. *Ordo* 67) and *felix* (Aus. *Ordo* 71), Arelatum is *Gallula Roma* (Aus. *Ordo* 74), Vienna is *opulenta* (Aus. *Ordo* 75), Hispalis is *clara* (Aus. *Ordo* 81) and finally Burdigala, his small homeland, *insignis* (Aus. *Ordo* 130).

Therefore, it is evident that Ausonius participates in the same dynamic that we have previously noticed in Ammianus.

### 2.3 Quintus Aurelius Symmachus<sup>50</sup>

In the case of the author who was considered at the end of the fourth century to be the champion of paganism, although it is not possible to find any reference in his *Epistulae* and *Relationes* to Constantinople, he contemplates the central concept that Rome is, in the aristocratic strata, attached to the Roman tradition. In this way, it is common in his private documentation the reference to Rome as *patria*, and, more explicitly, as *patria communis*<sup>51</sup>. In this sense, the language that served the city of the Tiber fulfils its mission of eulogy and praise to the ancient capital of the Empire. The word *urbs* is used as well as its synonym (e.g. Symm. *Ep.* 1.30 (24); 1.94 (88); 2.6; 2.11 and 12; 2.52; 3.55; 4.21; (5.32 (30),...), and it is occasionally joined in addition to other terms of equal character, such as *bona* (Symm. *Ep.* (3.12), *aeterna* <Symm. *Ep.* 3.55 9.148; Symm. *Rel.* 3.54 (61), 14.26 (34); 18.31 (38) and 37.50 (57)>, *magna* (Symm. *Ep.* 4.18), *sacra* <Symm. *Rel.* 3.54 (61)> and *venerabilis* (Symm. *Ep.* 8.27). In other words, Symmachus illustrates the behaviour of that section of Late Roman society insisting on placing Rome at the head of the management of the Empire, which is reflected in the highly honorific and encomiastic lexicon often associated with it.

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<sup>50</sup> We use the edition of O. Seeck included in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, München 1984.

<sup>51</sup> In particular, in the second instance in Symm. *Ep.* 5.84 (82), 5.85 (83), 5.87 (85) and 6.15 (16).

## 2.4 Rutilius Namatianus<sup>52</sup>

This tendency at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century persists in the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as reflected in the *De reditu suo* of the poet Rutilius Namatianus, who, like Symmachus or Ausonius, in addition to having held positions in the imperial administration (*magister officiorum* and *praefectus urbis Romae*)<sup>53</sup>, and noted also for his pagan condition<sup>54</sup>, would be another example of the ideal of virtuous man of the time, clinging to the Roman tradition. Otherwise, we are talking about a work dated to the year 416 in which he narrates his departure from Rome motivated by increasing barbarian pressure and prey, that is, composed at the time in which the first barbarian kingdoms were constituted and when, despite the events, he connects again Rome with the centrality of the Roman world.

So, Rome is proclaimed as *caput orbis* and *domina arces* (Rut. 1.194) or *mundi mater* (Rut. 2.60). It is also classified as *regina pulcherrima mundi* (Rut. 1.47) and as *Genitrix hominum Genitrix deorum* (Rut. 1.49). Added to these, identifying her as a body that brings together and integrates people into the Empire (Rut. 1.63-66), which she dominates (Rut. 1.64), her eternal role equally stands (Rut. 1.115-140) in addition to using the traditional term of *urbs* as its synonym (Rut. 1.8, 35, 66, 207, 302 and 331). When it is considered in an anthropomorphic sense, the sacredness of her head (Rut. 1.115), where she carries a tower-shaped helmet, a headband and a golden cone (Rut 1.117) are pointed out as well.

It is obvious that any mention to Constantinople would not fit here, but it is worth highlighting that the identification of Rome with the nucleus of the Roman world is still maintained, and at a time when political deterioration of the city who used to be the manager of the Empire was still more evident, even though, as it was the case with Ausonius, the author is not meagre in his extensive use of epithets that glorify it in this laudatory work. In any case, it would fit the idea of Rome displayed by authors at the end of the fourth century<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> We use for *De reditu suo* the edition of J. Vessereau-F. Préchac, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1961.

<sup>53</sup> *PLRE* vol. II, 770-771.

<sup>54</sup> In this respect Ribagorda Serrano, 1997.

<sup>55</sup> In this regard, it has been pointed out that, unlike Ammianus, who evoked the Rome of his time, Rutilius Namatianus invoked in his work the Rome he dreamed of or wanted to dream of. In this respect Zarini, 2007. On the representation of Rome in the poetry of the 5th Century B.C., Roberts, 2001

In conclusion, once the work of the above-mentioned writers has been analysed, we must point out that it is common to all of them avoiding the prominence of Constantinople, at the same time that they insist on introducing Rome to us as the capital of the Empire, and even in historical contexts where its decline is more than evident.

### 3. Constantinople and Roma in Late Roman Empire legislation

Focusing on legislative material, the first question that should be noted is that Rome and Constantinople are basically cities that receive some kind of laudatory lexicon, a phenomenon that is consolidating and affirming itself as centuries advance, so while in the legal sphere it begins to be perceived in the *Codex Theodosianus*, it will be found more and more frequently from Justinian onwards, which is reflected both in his *Codex* and his *Novellae*. Thus, the legal material of the fourth and fifth centuries, specifically regulations produced between the years 312 (date of the first laws in the *Codex Theodosianus*: *CTh.* 11.29.2) and 534 (date of the last laws included in the *Codex Iustinianus*: *C.I.* 1.4.33) will present a wide and rich range of encomiastic terms in relation to both urban centres<sup>56</sup> -*vid.* Appendix-, especially in reference to Constantinople, and, to a lesser extent, in allusion to Rome, being extraordinary the mentioning of other cities, and, when it occurs, it reflects that effectively, and in a hierarchical order, the latter are located behind these two big cities<sup>57</sup>.

We must specify, in any case, that this classification, according to evidence collected both in the very legislation and in other documentary sources of the time, can offer alterations depending on the period referred to. A clear example of this is Antioch, a city that during most of the 4<sup>th</sup> century takes precedence over Constantinople, being thus estimated in the middle of the century, as indicated in the above-mentioned *Expositio*, as

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<sup>56</sup> As we can see in the Appendix at the end of the present paper, they are overall 21 distinguished or even encomiastic appellations, linked to either city.

<sup>57</sup> Only Trier, Antioch and Alexandria are associated with this terminology in imperial constitutions. Specifically in the *Theodosianus* the first is described as *clarissima civitas* (*CTh.* 13.3.11 376) and Antioch as *decora civitas* (*CTh.* 12.1.169 dated 409). The post-Theodosian *Leges Novellae* uses the generic expression *clarae urbes* (*NVal.* 24). Finally, in the *Codex Iustinianus* Alexandria is considered *clarissima civitas* (*C.I.* 1.57.1 dated 469), *magna urbs* (*C.I.* 10.27.2) and *splendidissima civitas* (*C.I.* 2.7.13 and 9.5.1 dated 486), expression used also to refer to Antioch (*C.I.* 10.32.62 dated 457-465).

*civitas regalis, dominus orbis terrarum sedet* and *civitas splendida* (*Expositio* 23),<sup>58</sup> and that gradually loses this consideration, to the point that we cannot even see the publication of any constitution during the reign of Theodosios I in it (until then it had issued a total of 47 imperial constitutions, having also been residence of emperors, such as Julian)<sup>59</sup>.

In any case, and in relation to the preference shown in legislation for *Nea Roma*, we would point out that, with the passing of the years, it becomes imposed in the compiled Eastern imperial constitutions. This aspect explains the more favourable consideration of Constantinople, underlining thereby its hegemony and supremacy, increasing both the quantity and the variety of encomiastic and honorary epithets with which it is associated.

Therefore, in contrast to Latin literature at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, that intentionally ignores Constantinople and exalts Rome, the legislation of the *Codex Theodosianus* includes a large gallery of honorific terms to refer to what still Ammianus called, in a derogatory manner, *vetus Byzantium* (Amm. 22.8.8)<sup>60</sup>, to the point of being defined as *regia urbs* (*CTh.* 15.1.52 dated the year 424), during the reign of Theodosios II, this denomination not being used in reference to Rome in any imperial constitution of the *Codex Theodosianus*, as it should, in fact, be expected

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<sup>58</sup> In the middle of the fourth century, the city would have a population around 150,000 inhabitants, even enjoying free food deals from the end of the third century. In this respect Durliat 1990, 353-354.

<sup>59</sup> In the year 387, after disturbances in the city that ended with the demolition of statues dedicated to the Emperor, it lost the status of *Syriae metropolis*. On the succession of these episodes occurred in Antioch we are informed by the rhetorician Libanios in his *Orationes* (Lib. *Or.* 19.26,33,39-40; 20.5-6; 21.4,7,10-20 and 22.9-11). About these events, see French, 1998b; Liebeschuetz, 1972, 278-280; Browning, 1952.

<sup>60</sup> Let us not forget that, by the time in which his work focuses (end of the reign of Theodosios I) it is already customary in reference to Constantinople the name of *Nea Roma*, as recorded in the third canon of the Council held in the year 381 in Constantinople and literally stating the following: “El obispo de Constantinopla, por ser ésta la nueva Roma, debe tener el primado de honor después del obispo de Roma” (transl. by Ortiz de Urbina, 1969, 286). It is obvious, therefore, that Ammianus denies any kind of recognition to the Eastern capital, opting instead to refer to it in a tone that we could consider derogatory and resists to admit the change in the name of the city. On the other hand, until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. is not imposed the term *Byzantium* in allusion of Constantinopolis (Grig-Kelly, 2012, 9).

in a law issued by Justinian and dated to the year 530 (*C.I.* 1.17.1), that is, a century later.

Otherwise, the expression *urbs regia* will be a concept defining the character of Constantinople especially in future regulations, being liberally used by Justinian in his legislation, although already other Eastern emperors of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, such as Leon I, Zeno and Anastasios, made use of it<sup>61</sup>. It is true, however, that the regal character of Rome, although it is not reflected in the legislation of the *Theodosian*, is indisputable, in view of other fourth century literary sources, such as the aforementioned *Expositio*, where it is defined as *regalis* (*Expositio* 55: ... *civitatem maximam et eminentissimam et regalem, quae de nomine virtutem ostentat, et vocatur Roma*)<sup>62</sup>.

In what we are interested, even though the legislative material could underline the superiority of Constantinople, the number of imperial laws referring to Rome with some kind of encomiastic lexicon is still higher in the *Theodosian*. So, if within this legal corpus we find some laudatory formula in reference to Rome in 32 imperial constitutions, only 17 do the same in referring to Constantinople. At first glance, this purely statistical data could make us think that the city of the Tiber retains its primacy. However, the capital of the Bosphorus already equals Rome in the number of epithets with which is associated, so that both are tied to 10 appellations. It must be considered, too, that the number of constitutions included in the *Theodosian* and issued in Constantinople (627) is ten times greater than the laws published in Rome (59), city that is also exceeded in this compilation in the number of laws enacted in other urban centres, such as Mediolanum (336), Ravenna (213) or Treveris (126).

Not only this, a good proof that a greater role than to Rome starts effectively to be granted to Constantinople is the fact that the rhetorical

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<sup>61</sup> In the case of Leon I in such a case in *C.I.* 1.12.6 dated year 466, 1.3.30 -31- dated year 469, 1.2.14 dated year 470 and 1.3.32 -33- dated year 472; in the case of Zeno in *C.I.* 1.2.16 dated year 477 and 11.43 -42- and 12.40 -41-.11 *sine data*; and, finally, in the case of Anastasios in *C.I.* 1.2.17 and 12.1.18 *sine data* and 8.53.32 dated year 496. In any case, when it is used broadly is in the time of Justinian, noting its use up to a total of 16 imperial constitutions contained in the *Codex Iustinianus*, and in particular in his *Novellae*, where it appears in nearly 40 of them.

<sup>62</sup> However, in this work, Constantinople, as many other cities (Heraklea, Smyrna, Thessalonike, Salona, Syracuse,...) only reached the category of *civitas splendida* (*Expositio* 50). We use here the version included in Alexander Riese, *Geographi latini minores*, Georg Olms Hildesheim 1964.

technique of the superlative, that would reflect its superiority, is preferred in connection with *Nea Roma*. Thus, Constantinople is referred to in *Theodosian* legislation as *augustissima urbs* (*CTh.* 14.17.14 dated year 402 and 13.5.32 dated year 409), *florentissima urbs* (*CTh.* 15.2.4 dated year 389), *nobilissima urbs* (*CTh.* 5.14.36 dated year 396-405), *sacratissima urbs* (*CTh.* 14.12.1 dated year 386, 16.4.5 dated year 404, 13.5.32 dated year 409 and 6.23.4 dated year 437) and *splendidissima urbs* (*CTh.* 15.1.32 dated year 395 and 15.1.51 dated year 413), appearing the superlative in 10 of the concerned 17 constitutions. On the other hand, Rome is only described as *urbs sacratissima* (*CTh.* 14.3.12 dated year 370, 14.1.5 dated year 407, 16.5.53 dated year 412, 14.10.4 dated year 416 and 1.6.11 dated year 423) and as *splendidissima urbs* (*CTh.* 15.1.32 dated year 395), that is, 6 of 32 constitutions in which it is described with some kind of complimentary or encomiastic words.

In fact, the characteristic note of Rome in the *Theodosian* compilation is being joined to the epithet *aeterna*, not the superlative, which happens in a total of 16 instances<sup>63</sup>. From this point of view, this legislative material presents an identical trend to the Latin literature of the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, especially in authors like Ammianus and Symmachus (*vid.* note 27), i.e., those who would seek to underline by using this word the symbolic function of the city, in order to highlight and protect the same continuity of the State. However, as time goes by, it is patent that this expression becomes rather a mere rhetorical technique to reflect respect for the ancient capital, than a manifestation of the historical reality of the moment. In this sense we can still find its use in reference to Rome in the *NMaorian*. 4, dated July 11 of the year 458, or what is the same, when left only 18 years were left before the end of the Roman Empire in the West<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Exactly this happening in *CTh.* 15.1.11, 14.2.1 and 22.1 dated year 364; 14.6.3 and 11.2.2 dated year 365; 11.1.18 dated year 381; 14.1.3 and 4.6 dated year 389; 15.1.27 dated year 390; 1.6.10 *sine data* but because its *inscriptio* (*Valentinianus, Theodosius et Arcadius AAA. Neoterio praefecto praetorio*) dated at the end of the fourth century; 14.3.19 dated year 396; 7.13.14 and 14.2.3 dated year 397; 11.20.3 dated year 400; 9.40.20 dated year 408 and finally in 1.6.11 dated year 423. In reference to the contexts in which the expression *urbs aeterna* appears in *Theodosian's* legislation, Campolunghi, 1986. Recently it has been suggested the possibility the *constitutio* reflects the early consideration of Constantinopolis as New Rome (Gris-Kelly, 2012, 11)

<sup>64</sup> It is usual that imperial officials relate to terminology which insist also on highlighting its eternal condition. Unlike what happens with the ideological capital of the Empire – Rome or Constantinople, without difference – which ends up

In any case, to correctly assess the matter under study, the origin of those laws using encomiastic epithets should also be differentiated. It has been observed that, if it is possible to find an honourable mention to Rome in the constitutions enacted in the East, the same does not happen with Constantinople in laws promulgated in the *pars Occidentis*. In other words, in the preserved legislation the association of Constantinople with an encomiastic lexicon occurs almost exclusively in legal material of Eastern origin, being the exceptions *CTh.* 2.8.19 issued in Rome in 389, which typifies it as *maxima*, and 15.1.32, dated to year 395 and issued at Mediolanum, where it is called *splendidissima*, although on both occasions sharing this consideration with Rome. Therefore, legislative material and Latin writers from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century do seem to coincide in rating Constantinople, that is, Western legislative production does not use encomiastic do seem to coincide in mentioning it.

Added to this should be fact that, prior to Theodosios I, just on one occasion Constantinople had earned in *Theodosianus'* material laudatory treatment, exactly at *CTh.* 13.5.7 dated year 334, where Constantine had it phrased it in the following manner: *pro commoditate urbis, quam aeterno nomine iubente deo donavimus...*, that is, it was linked to a word (*aeterna*) used exclusively in reference to Rome<sup>65</sup>, a highly significant aspect that indicates what the intentions of Constantine were<sup>66</sup> and that preludes the prestigious future of the city he founded, even though it is an epithet used only in extraordinary references to it<sup>67</sup>.

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losing its union with its nickname, the emperors retained it instead, which is another clear example of how the use of this vocabulary was just responding to a stereotype or to a rhetorical tokenism. About the analysis of this vocabulary linked to the emperors in Late Antiquity normative, Cañizar Palacios, 2007, 195-198.

<sup>65</sup> The expression *aeternum nomen* appearing on *CTh.* 13.5.7 has been contested. In this sense, a part of historiography has opted to relate it with the Emperor Constantine, and another to link it to the city he founded. In this respect, Calderone 1993, 738 and ff.; Biscardi 1976, 24. In our case, we chose the second possibility given the growing role assumed by the city in the issuing of constitutions between 330 and 337, which constitutes a reinforcing element, rather than dispelling doubts, about the intentions of Constantine in equating the new capital, from every point of view, included the ideological, with Rome itself. Thus, up to 16 of 19 promulgated laws at that time were enacted in Constantinople.

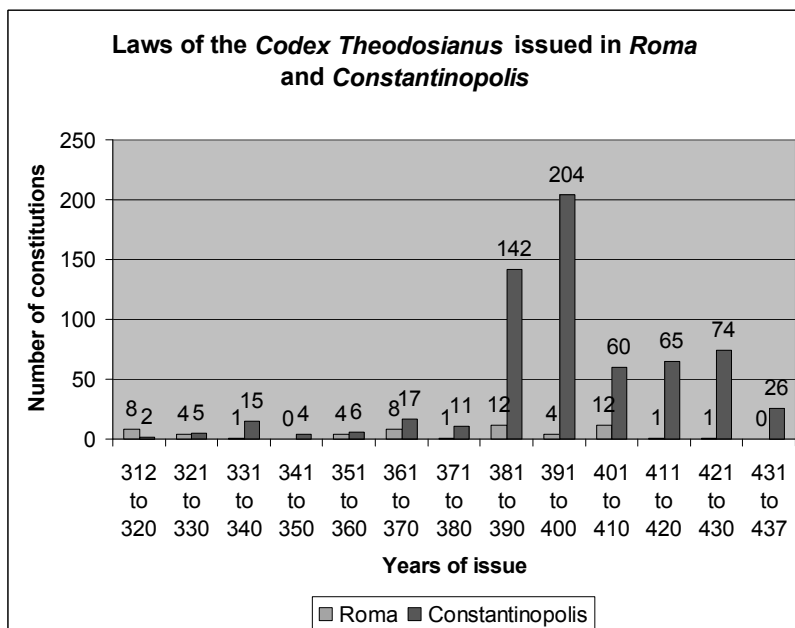
<sup>66</sup> The mere granting of his name to the city is a declaration of intentions showing the desire to make it the seat of government and his policy, and consequently, his imperial residence.

<sup>67</sup> In fact, throughout the *Theodosian* this designation in relation to Constantinople appears only once: *NMarcian.* 3, dated year 451.



We would have expected it in the case of Theodosios I, so that the honorific treatment of the Eastern capital eventually acquired importance, which also coincided with the period in which it becomes the main centre of imperial legislation -Fig. 1-, given its status as power see of this *Augustus*, circumstances that end up equating it definitely with Rome<sup>68</sup>. In fact, after the death of Constantine in 337 and until the access to the throne of Theodosios I in 379, that is, in a chronological range of 42 years, Constantinople appears as place of issue of only 34 imperial laws, while, as we noted at the beginning, there were more than 240 during the reign of the above-mentioned Emperor, in other words, in a period of 16 years 7 times more laws than in the previous 42 years were issued in the city.

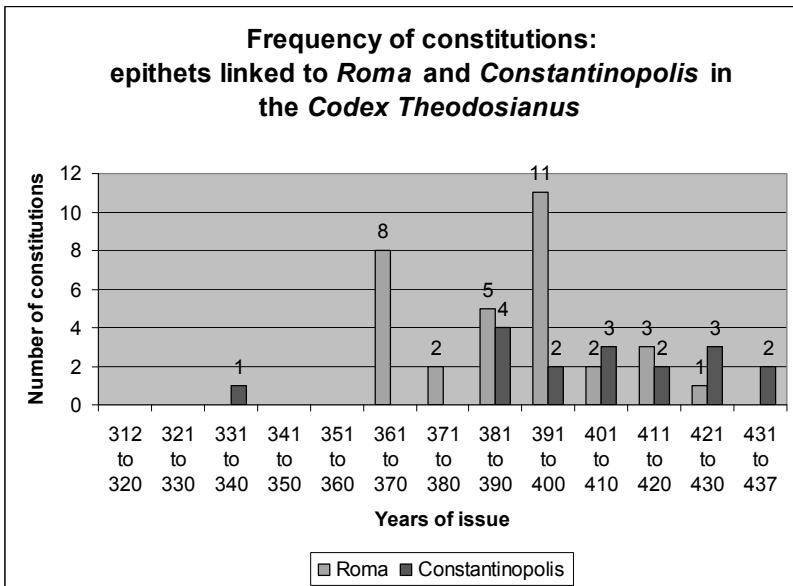
Figure 1.



<sup>68</sup> In any case, it is very curious that the most important document of his reign is enacted not in Constantinople, but in Thessalonike: *CTh.* 16.1.2 27 dated 27 February 380 year. Indeed, it is not until the year 381 that the capital founded by Constantine becomes the real seat of power of Theodosios I.

This progressive equality with the city of the Tiber is also attested by the frequency of appreciative vocabulary used in connection to either of them in imperial constitutions -Fig. 2-, where the pattern of epithets used shows that indeed Constantinople is, at least, at the same level as Rome. Thus, if Rome was *urbs inclyta* in *CTh.* 15.1.19 dated year 376, Constantinople achieves this category in 16.5.58 dated year 415, name that will also become one of the most profusely applied to the Eastern capital; if Rome was an *augusta civitas* in *CTh.* 15.1.27 dated year 390, Constantinople is estimated *augustissima urbs* in *CTh.* 14.17.14 in the year 402 and in 13.5.32 dated year 409, that is, in this case even surpassing in dignity the city of Latium, and, finally, if Rome was *urbs sacratissima* in *CTh.* 14.3.12 dated year 370, Constantinople also assumed this category in *CTh.* 14.12.1 dated year 386, being also an epithet applied to both cities extensively in future normative production -*vid.* Appendix-.

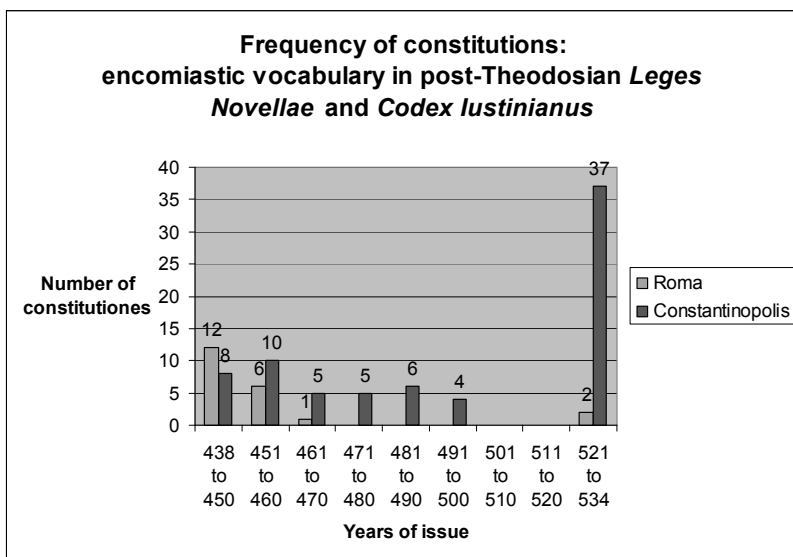
Figure 2.



We can see, therefore, that in the *Theodosian* both cities usually share laudatory terminology, included a phrase of high ideological content, such as *urbs aeterna*, what is attested in the case of Constantinople only in the aforementioned *CTh.* 13.5.7, dated year 334, and in 15.5.4, dated year 424.

It is not surprising if we take into consideration the fact that Constantinople emerges as a replica of Rome and was founded on the principle of *imitatio Romae*, hence assuming and sharing with it many privileges, among them, this denomination<sup>69</sup>. Most striking, however, is that none of the constitutions of Theodosios I, whose reign marks a clear turning point in the positive estimation of the city, emphasise its everlasting character.

Figure 3.



However, certain epithets seem to be reserved in the *Theodosian* to either city. In this sense, Constantinople is accompanied by words such as *alma* (*CTh.* 7.8.15 and 16 of the years 430 and 435), *florentissima* (*CTh.* 15.2.4 dated year 389), *nobilissima* (*CTh.* 5.14.36 dated years 396-405) and *regia* (*CTh.* 15.1.52 dated year 424), while Rome is linked to *reverenda* (*CTh.* 7.13.14 dated year 397), *venerabilis* (*CTh.* 15.7.5 dated year 380, 14.10.2 and 14.11.1 dated year 397, 14.15.4 dated year 398 and 13.5.38 dated year 414) and *veneranda* (*CTh.* 14.15.5 and 13.5.30, dated respectively years 399 and 400). It is a phenomenon that will be preserved

<sup>69</sup> On this aspect, Elia 2002, who affirms that the promotion of Constantinople was premeditated and planned by Constantinus (p. 79).

at a given time. From this point of view, if we analyse the legal production which follows the *Theodosian*, that is, the post-Theodosian *Leges Novellae* and the *Codex Iustinianus*, we can observe an identical trend. Thus, Rome is frequently associated to the words *sacratissima* and *venerabilis* and Constantinople to the terms *alma*, *inclita*, *regia* and *sacratissima* -*vid.* Appendix-.

The dynamic presented further by legislative material issued by Theodosios I will be granting greater respect and veneration to the city of Constantinople, altering the process followed in preserved legislation until then, where Rome was a city especially favoured with honorific language. The imbalance in the treatment of either city is logically explained by the gradual loss of control of the *pars Occidentis* and the survival instead of imperial structures in the East, corresponding specifically to its chancery the drafting of the legislation preserved.

Thus, this impression is reinforced if we follow with our gaze compilations of imperial constitutions, so that if in the post-Theodosian *Leges Novellae* there is still some equilibrium in the treatment of either city<sup>70</sup>, the balance quite clearly leans instead to Constantinople already in legislation dated from the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as shown in the *Codex Iustinianus* -Fig. 3-. Thus, in the constitutions issued between the years 452 and 534, there are countless laws that include an honorary lexicon linked to *Nea Roma*, as well as a variation of the epithets used in them, while such terms just appear in constitutions joined to the former capital of the Empire<sup>71</sup>.

Otherwise, the behaviour and evolution of imperial legislation, which shows the increasing prominence of Constantinople, fits in well with what

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<sup>70</sup> In this sense is linked to Rome terms as *aeterna* (*NVal.* 17 and 24, dated years 445 and 451), *sacra* (*NVal.* 5 and 36, dated years 440 and 452), *sacratissima* (*NVal.* 10, 22 and 29, dated years 441, 445 and 450), *venerabilis* (*NVal.* 5, 8.1, 17 and 20, the first two dated year 440 and the last two dated year 445, and *NMaorian.* 2 and 4, dated year 468) and *veneranda* (*NVal.* 5, dated year 440). On the other hand tied to Constantinople are the epithets *aeterna* (*NMarcian.* 3, dated year 451), *alma* (*NTh.* 17.1 and 25, dated respectively years 439 and 444), *florentissima* (*NTh.* 25, dated year 444), *inclita* (*NMarcian.* 2, dated year 450) and *sacratissima* (*NTh.* 5, dated year 438, 22.1, dated year 442 and 25, dated year 444 and *NMarcian.* 2, dated year 450).

<sup>71</sup> Rome is exactly associated to the terms *sacra*, *venerabilis* and *regia*. On the other hand in that space of time Constantinople is estimated *alma*, *felicissima*, *felix*, *florentissima*, *gloriosa*, *gloriosissima*, *inclita*, *magna*, *magnifica*, *regia*, *sacra*, *sacratissima* and *splendidissima*.

other signs of official status in the Late Roman Empire, such as currency production, showing a progressive introduction of references to Constantinople, especially in terms of its anthropomorphic representation in the reverse and obverse of coins, a phenomenon that is already noted in times of Constantine<sup>72</sup>, and it is reaffirmed during the reign of Theodosios I<sup>73</sup>, extending Constantinople seated and enthroned representation until the end of the sixth century<sup>74</sup>. The same could be said about other relevant documents of the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century as it is the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, which begins to announce the outstanding role of ancient Byzantium, again assuming an anthropomorphic representation along with cities such as Rome and Antioch<sup>75</sup>.

In addition to the above, from an urban and monumental point of view, Rome and Constantinople were two large cities that evolved in a different way during Late Antiquity, clearly showing the former's loss of consideration, and the latter's increased prestige, so that from this standpoint it also reaffirms the growing boom of the city of the Bosphorus, to the point that it ends up becoming a model and reference for *urbs regia*<sup>76</sup>. Thus, the historical reality of the fourth century shows that Constantinople, thanks to the privileges acquired due to its new administrative status, undergoes a population growth, precisely a reverse phenomenon to the decline that some important urban centres in the West start to show, and among these we must mention Rome itself<sup>77</sup>. In this sense, we could witness in the *pars Orientis* internal phenomena of

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<sup>72</sup> In this sense we have coins issued by Constantine whose obverse show Rome and Constantinople, case of *RIC* VII, Cyzicum 72, plate 22 with the inscription VRBS ROMA, and *RIC* VII, Cyzicum 93, plate 22 with the inscription CONSTANTINOPOLIS, coin in which the reverse shows also a human representation of the city in the bow of a ship. In both cases the coins should relate moments near the foundation of the new Eastern capital. In this respect San Vicente 2002, 215-217.

<sup>73</sup> Toynbee 1953.

<sup>74</sup> Grierson 1982.

<sup>75</sup> Particularly on the personification of Rome and Constantinople, Grig, 2012; Bühl 1995. In terms of the meaning and character of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, Prontera 2003; Levi-Levi 1967.

<sup>76</sup> About this respect Vespignani 2010.

<sup>77</sup> The demographic decline of Rome shall be charged especially from 6<sup>th</sup> century, not returning to experience growth until 16<sup>th</sup> Century. In this respect Nicolet 2000b. It has been suggested even that Rome attracts people in the fourth and fifth centuries (Purcell 2001).

migration to specific places such as the city founded by Constantine<sup>78</sup>, which will eventually become in times of Justinian the most populous city of the ancient Roman world<sup>79</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions

In order to recapitulate, it should first be advised that the analysed phenomenon of the enrichment of vocabulary in Late Antiquity, aimed at the creation and distinction of roles and hierarchies, is, first and foremost, a rhetorical resource that does not arise exclusively in Late Roman legislation or affects solely an urban area; it also evolved over time in his characterisation in the same way: from language with high encomiastic meaning to mere formalities of honorary and protocol type<sup>80</sup>.

Secondly, from the end of the fourth century, and particularly from the reign of Theodosios I, it is in Constantinople where the main activity of the emperor lies, who, especially in the East, abandons his nomadism to settle definitely in it. As a result of such circumstances, the new capital is growing in importance, from every point of view, which is observed, among other things, in the rich and varied lexicon that finally ends fostering, being the manifestation, as we have seen, of a preserved legislation, therefore created in faithful witness of what happens at the time.

In any case, considering what was said, it is evident that the depiction of the capital of the Roman East offered by Latin authors of the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, masking a situation where Constantinople begins to move the centrality of the Empire to the area of the Bosphorus, becoming heir and continuator of Rome, so that really it is not only a *Nea Roma*, as it was called by the Constantinopolitan historian Sokrates Scholastikos (Soc.

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<sup>78</sup> This attraction of population must be related to the policy sponsored by Constantine and to the increasingly similar privileges of Constantinople and Rome. In this respect, see Rodríguez López 2007; Elia 2002; Mango 1985; Dagron 1984.

<sup>79</sup> Ward-Perkins 2000, 64-66. Despite this, still in the sixth century laudatory voices in reference to Rome could be heard in the East, e.g. Prokopios of Caesarea, who identifies it with the largest and most famous of the world cities (Procop. *De bello Goth.* 3.22). In this respect, Carolla 1998.

<sup>80</sup> We must remember that within the legislation analysed, the largest part corresponds to that coming from the Eastern part of the Empire, characterised by the use of official vocabulary linked to the purest tradition, being prone to using coined phrases and expressions, hence its drift towards a highly stereotyped language. In this respect Vidén 1984.

*H.E.* 1.16), but also a *Romae filia*, as Saint Augustine referred to it (*Agus. De civitate Dei* 5.25.1) and even using the name used by professor Gilbert Dagron, a widow of Rome<sup>81</sup>, circumstance that certainly reaffirms the set of epithets that officially are associated with it in preserved legislation.

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<sup>81</sup> Dagron 2000, 378.

## Appendix A

### Encomiastic vocabulary associated with Rome and Constantinople in legislation works between years 312 to 534 (i).

Epithets	Roma	Constantinople
aeterna	CTh. 14.2.1 (364) CTh. 14.22.1 (364) CTh. 15.1.11 (364) CTh. 11.2.2 (365) CTh. 14.6.3 (365) CTh. 11.1.18 (381) CTh. 14.4.6 (389) CTh. 14.1.3 (389) CTh. 15.1.27 (390) CTh. 14.3.19 (396) CTh. 7.13.14 (397) CTh. 14.2.3 (397) CTh. 1.6.10 (end 4 <sup>th</sup> century) CTh. 11.20.3 (400) CTh. 9.40.20 (408) CTh. 1.6.11 (423) NVal. 17 (445) NVal. 34 (451) NMaorian. 4 (458)	CTh. 13.5.7 (334) CTh. 15.5.4 (424) NMarcian. 3 (451)



alma		CTh. 7.8.15 (430) CTh. 7.8.16 (435) NTh. 17.1 (439) NTh. 25 (444) C.I. 1.3.23 (452) C.I. 1.5.8 (455) C.I. 1.3.25 (456) C.I. 1.4.13 (456) C.I. 3.24.3 (485-486) C.I. 4.30.14 (528) C.I. 3.22.6 (528-529) C.I. 12.34(35).1 (528-529) C.I. 1.4.22 (529) C.I. 9.4.6 (529) C.I. 3.1.13 (530) C.I. 2.52(53).7 (531) C.I. 1.17.2 (533) C.I. 1.4.34 (534)
augusta	CTh. 15.1.27 (390)	
augustissima		CTh. 14.17.14 (402) CTh. 13.5.32 (409)
felicissima		C.I. 1.3.41(42) (528)
felix		C.I. 1.2.24 (530) C.I. 1.4.34 (534)

## Appendix B

### Encomiastic vocabulary associated with Rome and Constantinople in legislation works between years 312 to 534 (ii).

Epithets	Roma	Constantinople
florentissima		CTh. 15.2.4 (389) NTh. 25 (444) C.I. 12.3.3 (sine data) C.I. 1.49.1 (479) C.I. 1.53.1 (528) C.I. 5.70.7 (530) C.I. 3.1.15 (531) C.I. 7.33.12 (531)
gloriosa		C.I. 1.5.12 (528)
gloriosissima		C.I. 12.3.3 (sine data)
inclita	CTh. 15.1.19 (376)	CTh. 16.5.58 (415) NMarcian. 2 (450) C.I. 1.51.11 (444) C.I. 1.3.25 (456) C.I. 11.32(31).3 (469) C.I. 1.3.31(32) (472) C.I. 1.3.34(35) (472) C.I. 8.11.22 (472) C.I. 3.24.3 (485-486) C.I. 8.10.12 (sine data) C.I. 1.2.22 (529) C.I. 4.21.18 (529)
magna		C.I. 1.4.30 (531)
magnifica		C.I. 1.3.32(33) (472)
maxima	CTh. 2.8.19 (389)	CTh. 2.8.19 (389)
nobilissima		CTh. 5.14.36 (396-405)

regia	C.I. 1.17.1 (530)	CTh. 15.1.52 (424) C.I. 1.12.6 (466) C.I. 1.3.30(31) (469) C.I. 1.2.14 (470) C.I. 1.3.32(33) (472) C.I. 1.2.16 (477) C.I. 11.43(42) (sine data) C.I. 12.40(41).11 (sine data) C.I. 1.2.17 (sine data) C.I. 12.1.18 (sine data) C.I. 8.53.32 (496) C.I. 4.20.16 (527) C.I. 1.51.14 (529) C.I. 7.63.5 (529) C.I. 9.47.26 (529) C.I. 1.2.24 (530) C.I. 1.4.28 (530) C.I. 1.5.20 (530) C.I. 2.55(56).5 (530) C.I. 5.4.25 (530)
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## Appendix C

### Encomiastic vocabulary associated with Rome and Constantinople in legislation works between years 312 to 534 (iii).

Epithets	Roma	Constantinople
		C.I. 2.46(47).3 (531) C.I. 8.10.13 (531) C.I. 8.10.14 (532) C.I. 1.4.32 (sine data) C.I. 4.21.22 (sine data) C.I. 1.11.9 (sine data) C.I. 10.11.7 (sine data)
reverenda	CTh. 7.13.14 (397)	
sacra	CTh. 14.15.2 (364) CTh. 14.10.3 (399) NVal. 5 (440) NVal. 36 (452)	C.I. 1.5.8 (455)
sacratissima	CTh. 14.3.12 (370) CTh. 14.1.5 (407) CTh. 16.5.53 (412) CTh. 14.10.4 (416) CTh. 1.6.11 (423) NVal. 10 (441) NVal. 20 (445) NVal. 29 (450)	CTh. 14.21.1 (386) CTh. 16.4.5 (404) CTh. 13.5.32 (409) CTh. 6.23.4 (437) NTh. 5.1 (438) C.I. 7.63.2 (440) NTh. 22.1 (442) NTh. 25 (444) C.I. 1.24.4 (444) NMarcian. 2 (450) C.I. 1.1.4 (452) C.I. 8.53.30 (459) C.I. 12.20.4 (sine data) C.I. 12.21(22).8 (484) C.I. 11.43(42).11 (sine data) C.I. 2.7.26 (524) C.I. 8.10.13 (531)

splendidissima	CTh. 15.1.32 (395)	CTh. 15.1.32 (395) CTh. 15.1.51 (413) C.I. 1.3.25 (456) C.I. 1.17.2 (533)
venerabilis	CTh. 15.7.5 (380) CTh. 14.10.2 (397) CTh. 14.11.1 (397) CTh. 14.15.4 (398) CTh. 13.5.38 (414) NVal. 5 (440) NVal. 8.1 (440) NVal. 17 (445) NVal. 20 (445) NMaorian. 2 (458) NMaorian. 4 (458)	
veneranda	CTh. 14.15.5 (399) CTh. 13.5.30 (400) NVal. 5 (440)	

# THE SO-CALLED “COLLATIO LUSTRALIS” IN POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD: A TAX FEARED BY TRADERS AND ARTISANS

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## 1. Introduction

The *collatio lustralis* was a general tax introduced by emperor Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century. It was applied from then until the end of the following century, as a direct tax on the wealth of *negotiatores*, or traders, in general<sup>1</sup>.

This tax arose as part the system fundamentally propelled by Diocletian. The immense Roman territory was divided up into plots of rural land for taxation purposes, with each *iugum* as a taxable unit that measured the wealth (the tax base) of agricultural land owners. The Treasury assigned a number of plots<sup>2</sup> to each land owner, depending on the extension and characteristics of the estates they owned<sup>3</sup>. Alongside the *iugum*, a *caput* was used as a tax unit to work out the *capitatio humana* that measured and valued the work capacity of agricultural land owners<sup>4</sup>. It was also used to calculate, as part of their wealth, their family members,

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<sup>1</sup> On Roman Tax Law, see the recent contributions made in this field: Cerami 1997; Blanch 1998, 53ff.; Fernández de Buján 2010, 1ff.; Aparicio 2006, 62ff; 2012, 191ff.

<sup>2</sup> Initially, the value of a *iugum* would be calculated depending on the amount of land on an estate that could be ploughed by one man and a pair of oxen.

<sup>3</sup> Serrigny 1862, 72ff.

<sup>4</sup> De Martino 1967, 344ff. highlights that whilst in the western dioceses the term *capitatio* usually referred to each man's working capacity as well as the wealth of the estates, in the east other terms were added to specify the kind of *capitatio*: *terrena* for estates and *humana atque animalia*.

the free workers in their service and the slaves registered at their estates, as well as the working animals used to farm the land.

In the eastern part of the Empire, attempts were made to extend the *capitatio* to the population of cities, such as the one made by the emperor Galerius Maximianus in the year 307-308. The effort to create an urban *capitatio* that would also include other different taxes that were already applied to traders and craftsmen (many of which were municipal) was not successful, undoubtedly due to the unpopularity of a tax of this nature.

## 2. Origins of the tax

Within this historical framework, Constantine<sup>5</sup> established the so-called *collatio lustralis* or *chrysargyron*<sup>6</sup> as a tax that should be paid in either gold or silver (and not with money) and that should, in some way, substitute the failed attempts to create an urban *capitatio* as the necessary equivalent to the rural *capitatio* created by Diocletian<sup>7</sup>.

The creation of this tax was therefore aimed at complementing the rural *capitatio* and was part of the reorganisation of the Roman public treasury that took place at the beginning of the fourth century to deal with the bureaucracy in civil and military matters of the later years of the Roman Empire, in a state that was becoming increasingly interventionist.

## 3. Tax base and taxpayers

The *collatio lustralis*<sup>8</sup> was to be paid by *negotiatores*<sup>9</sup> who were registered in the *civitates* of the Roman Empire, including not only traders

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<sup>5</sup> Lact., *de mort.persect.* 26,1-3. However we know that in the third century had taxes levied *negotiatores* activity as well as prostitutes and pimps in the city of Rome. Lécivain 1903, 331-332, Chastagnol 1966, 60; 1993, 430, Gebbia 1991, 385ff.

<sup>6</sup> Also referred to with the expressions *lustralis auri argentine collatio*, *auraria functio*, or *aurum negotiatorum* (*S.H.A., vita Alex.* 32,5; Zos, *Hist. nov.* 2,38,2-3; Lib., *Orat.*, 2,477; Bas., *Epist.*, 88 (Migne, PG. 32,469); Zon., *Ann.* 3,11; *CTh.* 1.5.14; *CTh.* 7.21.3; *CTh.* 12.6.29; *CTh.* 13.1.11; 13; 18-19; *CTh.* 16.2.36).

<sup>7</sup> Constantine also created the *collatio glebalis* tax that was imposed on the heritage, particularly land, of senators. Carlà 2009, 179ff.

<sup>8</sup> As Delmaire 1989, 389 recalls, the sources gather together, amongst others, the expressions *aurum negotiatorum*, *collatio negotiatorum*, *negotiatorum dispensia*, *pragmateytikós jrysargýros* or artisans tax.

but also other groups as wide ranging as to include craftsmen in general, innkeepers, tavern keepers, and even prostitutes and professional beggars. The tax, following the *capitatio* model, was a direct tax on the productive capacity of the *negotiator*<sup>10</sup> and not on the profits obtained from his/her activity. This tax base was calculated according to scales fixed by the administration, such as, for example, the personal property and real property used as company capital, the *negotiator*'s family, and the employees working in the business, as well as slaves, beasts of burden, animals and tools used in production. On these bases, different tax rates would have supposedly been applied depending on the nature of the business in question.

Literary sources do not shed any light on whether the *chrysargyron* applied the same tax rates to all *negotiatores* of the same trade within the city, that is to say, whether the heritage or profits obtained by each professional were taken into account. Whatever the case may have been, the total amount of tax had to be paid by each member of a guild of *negotiatores* and it is reasonable to think that the tax collector would only

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<sup>9</sup> When it came to the payment of the *collatio*, imperial law encouraged the term *negotiator* to cover not only traders in general but also, without exception, craftsmen (Zos., *Hist. Nov.* 2,38,2; Prokop. of Gaza, *Paneg.* § 13; Lib., *Orat.* 2,478), bankers and moneylenders (*CTh.* 13,1,18; 400), innkeepers, the owners of brothels (Lib., *Orat.*, 2,477; *Nov. Th.*, 18 pr.), and the prostitutes themselves along with their pimps: this meant that the exercise of these activities was recognized and, in turn, regulated by the public authorities who saw them as an important source of financial funds (Zon., *Ann.* 14,13,56 C; Zos., *Hist. Nov.* 2,38,2; Procop. of Gaza, *Paneg.* § 13; Evrag., *Hist. Eccl.* 3,39 (Migne, P.G., 86,2677); Giorg. Cedren. (*Comp. Hist.*, Migne, 121, 681). On this subject, see Chastagnol 1993, 431. Simple beggars even ended up having to pay this tax (Zon., *Ann.* 14,13,56 C; Evrag., *Hist., eccles.* 3,39), as did the workers of state corporations such as *murileguli* (*CTh.* 13,1,9,21). On the other hand, as Seeck 1900 [1958] c. 370 points out, Valentinianus I made farmers and painters exempt from paying the tax, although shoemakers, for example, were still obliged to (Lib., *Orat.* 2,478). In addition, *negotiatores* who belonged to categories who did have to pay the tax had to be registered in the *negotiatorum matricula* (Priscian., *Paneg.* 164; *CTh.* 15,1; *CTh.* 11,5,1; *CTh.* 3,1,13; *CTh.* 16,2,15 = C.I., 1,13,1) or central register of *negotiatores* of each municipality for tax purposes, where all the names of all citizens who had to pay the tax appeared. This *matricula* was symbolically burned in public in Constantinople in the mass ceremony organized by the Emperor Anastasios when he definitively abolished the *collatio lustralis* (vid. infra). See Giardina 1981, 123ff.; García Garrido 2001, 138ff.

<sup>10</sup> Delmaire 1989, 370; Jones 1964 I, 237, II, 871-872.



be concerned with the effective collection of fixed quantities in advance in gold or silver and not matters relating to the just distribution of the financial amount between contributors. The latter would have surely been left for the consideration of the cities and the respective guilds themselves.

Indeed, the tax must have had harsh consequences for many businessmen in practice and was both feared and hated throughout Empire in general, as can be deduced from the drama with which different authors from the time refer to the tax, condemning the weighty burden it represented for many citizens. The tax seems to have led to extreme circumstances, such as parents being desperate because they could not pay the tax and finding themselves forced to sell their own children in order to be able to do so<sup>11</sup>.

Bearing this in mind, it comes as no surprise to us that Anthemios, praetorian prefect to the East (CTh. 13,1,20)<sup>12</sup>, should authorise the staggered payment of the *collatio* in the year 410 in exchange for prohibiting the cancellation of any tax due. The monthly payment of the tax was even allowed, as we are told by one source<sup>13</sup> that cites a corporation of eleven *mercatores* in Egypt who named a representative, agreeing to pay him 2,000,000 *denarii* on the 18<sup>th</sup> of each month<sup>14</sup> so that a single payment could be made of its total every four years.

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<sup>11</sup> *Libanios (Orat. 33,33; 46,22)* refers to it as a heavy burden and an intolerable tax. *Zosimos (Hist., Nov., 2,38,2-3)* tells a story of weeping and suffering, of torture and whippings, of sons being sold and daughters handed over to brothels. *Prisian (Paneg. 153)* recalls taxpayers with eyes full of tears and *Prokopios of Gaza (Paneg. § 13)* defines the tax as unjust and cruel. Chastagnol 1966, 48-49, however, tells us that phrases and expressions of this kind are simply part of the rhetoric weapons used often by authors of the time to define similar situations or circumstances, as is the case with *Lactantius (de mort.. 8,5; 27,6)* or *Basil of Caesarea (Hom. VI)*. On the character more or less burdensome of the this tax, see: Barnish 1989, 254-256; Jones 1964 II, 872.

<sup>12</sup> *Functiones, quas conferentium frequentia extenuata debilitat, ad stabilitatem revocandae sunt, ut, quod simul et sub una conventionione patebatur, sub parva ac minima contributione absque consensu conferentium praebeatur. Hoc in lustralis auri collatione in perpetuum decernimus observari, illud videlicet praecaventes, ne quis a nostra clementia veptigal huiusmodi audeat postulare.*

<sup>13</sup> PSI (Pubblicazione della Società Italiana per la Ricerca dei Papiri Greci e Latini), Firenze, 1912-1913.

<sup>14</sup> This was the *Oxyrhynchos* corporation of metal smiths who named an *Aurelius Chaeremon* as their representative.

#### 4. Tax collection and regularity of payments

The Greek name for the tax was *chrysargyron* (χρυσάργυρον), which alluded to the fact that it was to be paid in gold or silver by taxpayers, as is highlighted in various constitutions in the Codex Theodosianus such as CTh. 13,1,1 (356); CTh. 13,1,4 (362); CTh. 13,1,6 (364); CTh. 13,1,8 370)<sup>15</sup>. The sources also make use of other terms or expressions to refer to the tax such as <<*collatio*>>, <<*oblatio*>>, <<*aurum et argentum*>>, <<*pensio auraria*>>, <<*functio auraria*>>, whilst the expression with which we refer to the tax today (*collatio lustralis*) is only documented from the year 379 – *lustralis auri depensio*-, in a law mentioned in CTh. 13,1,11<sup>16</sup> that mentions that it was collected every five years by the Treasury (also, in rubric of CTh. 13,1: *de lustralis collatione*, year 438).

The question as to how often *collatio* payments were collected has been discussed in light of the sources available: Seeck<sup>17</sup> rejects the notion that the tax was collected regularly, stating in his thesis on this very subject that, although the tax carries the name *collatio lustralis* (since it was demanded every five years in theory), in reality it was collected in a much more random fashion. This was because it depended heavily on the dates of *largitiones* payments: the extraordinary donations that emperors would make throughout their reign both to Roman soldiers and to other groups of beneficiaries as a way of celebrating anniversaries such as the fifth, tenth or twentieth anniversary of their reign. However, as expected, these payments were subject to variation depending on the different emperors, since they would work from the different dates on which they began their respective reigns.

A second possibility was that the tax must have been collected on a regular basis every four or five years, regardless of whether the collection date should coincide with the anniversaries of the different emperors. According to this theory, the tax would be collected regularly with the regularity in force, according to different extracts from authors such as Zosimos (*Hist. Nov.*, 2,38,2), Evragios (*Hist. Eccl.* 3,39), Nicephoros Kallistos (*Hist. Eccl.* 16,40), Kedrenos (*Comp. Hist.*, I, 627, B), or Joshua

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<sup>15</sup> Jones II 1964, 1178.

<sup>16</sup> *Etsi omnes mercatores spectat lustralis auri depensio, clerici tamen intra Illyricum et Italiam in denis solidis, intra Gallias in quinis denis solidis immunem usum conversationis exerceant. Quidquid autem supra hunc modum negotiationis versabitur, id oportet ad functionem aurariam devocari.*

<sup>17</sup> Seeck 1900 [1958] c. 371-372.

the Stylite (*Chron.*, § 31), and in C. J. 11,1,1. In this respect, Delmaire<sup>18</sup> has stated that the tax would have been due every four years<sup>19</sup>, from 314 or 318, and would have continued to be collected with this regularity until it was abolished in 498. The author has drawn up a table of dates based on the evidence provided in texts that seems to prove that the tax was collected every four years, to a certain extent. However, he has also left open the possibility that there were extraordinary payments of the tax in different years, as seems to be evident from the law passed by Valentinianus I in the year 364, in which he states that traders should pay a certain amount in gold and silver.

The amount resulting from the tax collection was assigned to the *comes sacrarum largitionum*<sup>20</sup> who was in charge of distributing the donations and offerings of the emperor in the fourth and fifth centuries, in either money or precious metals. This collection was carried out by the praetor prefects<sup>21</sup> and, following their instructions, by the respective vicars and the provincial governors. In this way, the payments collected in gold or silver in the provinces were kept in the safe boxes of the prefectures and were then distributed between beneficiaries by the *comes sacrarum*

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<sup>18</sup> Delmaire 1985a, 128

<sup>19</sup> It is true that in our sources we find statements such as the following: «this unbearable tax, the *chrysargyron*, that makes people tremble every five terrible years». Despite this, Delmaire 1985a, 126 highlights that according to the Romans' calculations of years, the first year of a period was also considered the last year of the previous period, meaning that the same year was counted twice. The author also points out that in Antiquity, the term *lustrum* was also used to refer to the period between one Olympics and another (4 years). Finally, Karayannopoulos 1958, 125 considers important the fact that the considerable number of complaints and laments over this tax that are documented in texts never mention sudden changes or surprises in terms of the years in which the tax was collected. On the contrary, the sources make reference to the fateful regularity with which the tax was collected. *Vid.* Delmaire 1985b, 621ff.; Blanch 2011a, nt. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Delmaire 1985a, 120, nt. 1 highlights that the collection of the tax was assigned, in accordance with Malalas, to the *aerarium*, a term that was no longer used in the fourth and fifth centuries to refer to the Roman treasury, but rather the respective safe boxes of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* and the *comes rei privatae*, to distinguish them from the safe box of the praetor prefect. On the *sacrae largitiones* and their management, see also: Seeck, 1900 [1958], c. 671; Karayannopoulos 1958, 54ff.; Stein I, 1949, 115ff.; Jones I, 1964, 427; De Martino 1967, 379.

<sup>21</sup> The author also points out that most of the constitutions mentioned in title 13.1 of the Codex Theodosianus were directed precisely to the praetorian prefects, vicars and provincial governors.

*largitionum*. At the same time, the tax was collected whilst keeping a double set of books: firstly, at a provincial level under the governors of the respective provinces, who would then raise a copy of the corresponding prefect office accounts every four years. Since the era of Valentinianus III and Valente, the tax was generally only collected in gold, as we are told in a passage by Cassiodorus and various laws documented in the *Codex Theodosianus*.

We may add here that throughout the fourth century, the provincial governors placed the *decuriones* of each municipality in charge of the distribution and exaction of the tax amongst the *negotiatores* registered on the *matricula* of each *civitas*. The governors themselves were in charge of collecting the taxes and were not able to reduce or approve cancellations in the tax payers' favour since this could mean that they were fined double the amount reduced or cancelled. At the end of the fourth century, this system was substituted by another and the *decuriones* were relieved of their weighty duty and the guilds or groups of *negotiatores* of the municipality were placed in charge of collecting the *collatio lustralis* tax from their members instead. Each group or union had to designate a representative as the member responsible to the treasury for collecting the tax<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Pap. Mich. Inv.* 3708 (= ZPE 61, 1985, 73) which contains a receipt for the payment of a *chrysargyron* signed on 26<sup>th</sup> June 386 AD by the secretary of the fullers of *Oxyrhynchos* (other papyruses of interest include those gathered in *PSI*. 884 and in *P. Ross. Georg. V*, 28). Also in CTh. 13,1,17, we find a constitution by Honorius in the year 399, directed by the governor of Numidia, in which the *decuriones* are relieved of their duties to collect the *aurum lustralis* and which established that the *negotiatores* required to pay the tax should choose *mancipes* (tax collectors) from within their own group: *a negotiatoribus aurum lustrale dependi non ignoramus et cum ad eos solet distributionis cura recurrere, quos necessitas conlationis adstringit, non convenit municipes hoc onere subiacere. Sciant igitur de corpore suo, sicut in omnibus fere civitatibus, mancipes eligere absque ulla aerarii nostri deminutione, a curialibus alienae functionis distributione reiecta* (see also CTh. 12,6,29, 403, where it is stated that the representative must be a suitable member of the group and accepts full responsibility for payments not being fulfilled). Delmaire 1989, 368-369; Gebbia 1991, 390.

## 5. Individuals exempt from paying the tax

• Imperial law stated that certain groups of beneficiaries, who met with particular social or economic requirements, were exempt from paying the tax. Those not required to pay included the following:

• Firstly, when selling their own agricultural produce or livestock, the owners of agricultural land were not required to pay the tax, as long as they only sold their own goods at markets in their region, as is documented, for example, in CTh. 13,1,3 (361), CTh. 13,1,6 (364), CTh. 13,1,8 (370), CTh. 13,1,10 (374)<sup>23</sup> and in CTh. 13,1,12 (384). Exemption from the tax was granted not only to encourage farming, due to the need for food (in Rome and Constantinople in particular), but also for fair taxation reasons, since these owners also paid the rural *capitatio* tax. They also had to meet the requirements set by the Treasury with regards to the payment of *annonae*, the periodical distribution of basic foodstuffs such as wheat, oil and wine as a regular allowance for soldiers and civil servants in general.

• Secondly, senators (CTh. 13,1,3, 361) and *decuriones* (CTh. 12,1; CTh. 13,1,41, 362)<sup>24</sup> were also exempt from paying the tax as owners of large country estates that were already taxed for other reasons. *Decuriones* were also exempt from paying the tax even if they owned workshops and factories, as long as they did not act as *negotiatores* selling their own products to consumers or to other *negotiatores* for profit (CTh. 12,1,72, 370; CTh. 13,1,4, 362).

• Thirdly, those activities that were deemed to belong to liberal professions were also exempt from the tax, for example, when it came to doctors or teachers, according to CTh. 13,3,2 (326). We should also mention here the exemption noted in one of Valentinianus I's constitutions from the year 374 (CTh. 13,4,4) relating to *picturae professores*, as long as they had been born free and only sold art that they had done themselves to third parties. Interestingly enough, this exemption did not seem to extend, according to sources, to other artists, such as sculptors.

• Fourthly, in fragment 117 of the Syro-Roman Law Book, we are told that religious people were not required to pay the *collatio* under

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting that this last law seems to have extended the exemption from paying *collatio lustralis* not only to farm workers and day labourers (*rusticana plebe*) but also to the corporation of builders when expressly referring to *fabri* and *figuli*.

<sup>24</sup> Delmaire 1989, 365

Constantine, and that this exemption was maintained throughout his reign (CTh. 16,2,14; 357)<sup>25</sup>. The question now lies in what the real scope of the tax was, since we can be sure that, in any case, different constitutions made at a later date restrict the exemption to those involved in sales aimed at helping the poor and those in need. However, it must have been the case that over time a number of religious communities began to act as *negotiatores* themselves, initially for charitable and welfare purposes, at least in part, to look after the needs of religious communities or those of churches and convents. This led to a change in the direction of the rules governing the tax in this area; in the year 359 (CTh. 16,2,15,1), a law was passed that made all commercial activity carried out by clergymen up to a certain threshold exempt from the *collatio*, independently of whether the profits were allocated to religious purposes or others, such as for example, the sustenance of the religious community itself. In the year 379, for example, the exemption was set at 15 *solidi* for the prefecture of Italy and 10 *solidi* for that of Gaul. In the fifth century, however, the Imperial Chancellery was less trusting in this area and even ended up excluding from tax exemptions all clergymen who carried out the activities of *negotiatores*. Arkadios even published a constitution in the year 400 that stated that religious followers should not work in trade. Valentinianus III extended this ban to the West and made a special emphasis on those clergymen who hid behind their profession to avoid paying a tax that they would have had to pay as *negotiatores*.

- Finally, army veterans also enjoyed a limited tax exemption after a long period of military service, or following injury or illness. They were granted a limited amount of exemption from paying the tax should they dedicate themselves the activities of *negotiatores*. This exemption was set at 100 *folles*<sup>26</sup> in a constitution in the year 320 and was restated by other laws passed later on. Also, in the year 329, sailors belonging to the *navicularii* who, in addition to other duties, were in charge of supplying Rome with food, were granted exemption from paying all *collationes*.

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<sup>25</sup> On the tax exemptions of clergymen, see Delmaire 1989, 362, nt. 32, amongst others: Ferrari dalle Spade 1939, 90ff.; Biondi 1952, 370-371; Dupont 1967, 741ff.; Elliott 1978, 326ff.; Eck 1980, 127ff. This was reaffirmed by Constantius in a law passed in the year 356.

<sup>26</sup> On the use of the *folles* as a monetary unit, its value and its development, see Jones 1964 I, 431.

## 6. Abolition of the tax

The *collatio lustralis* was finally abolished by Anastasios<sup>27</sup> in May 498<sup>28</sup> through an edict that was published in all of the cities of the Eastern Roman Empire<sup>29</sup>. This led to a number of celebrations in the city of Constantinople and in many other cities that were recorded in some detail in various literary sources from the time.<sup>30</sup> Despite this, it was impossible for a tax whose collection was so efficient<sup>31</sup> to completely disappear, despite its unpopularity. In fact, the tax continued to be collected in those cities in which there were institutions run by benefactors in place, whose profits went precisely towards paying the *chrysgargyron* by *negotiatores*.

In addition, the abolition of the tax, which was so keenly demanded for by the society at the time, had to be compensated by other fiscal means, amongst which we can highlight the increased profits of the emperor's *res private*, which was mostly made up of large estates, that were collected and managed by the *Comes Rei Privatae*<sup>32</sup>. In this measure, Stein sees a

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<sup>27</sup> Karayannopoulos 1958, 135-136; Chastagnol 1966, 74ff.; Jones I, 1964, 237; Delmaire 1989, 371-372; Agudo 2010, 12ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Chronica of Edessa*, 74 (Chastagnol 1966, 75). However, see Delmaire 1989, 372 who gathers together different literary sources according to which the probable dates for the edict were the years 501, 507 or 512.

<sup>29</sup> Josh., the Stylite, *Chron.* § 31.

<sup>30</sup> Prisc., *Paneg.* 149ff.; Procop. of Gaza, *Paneg.* § 13; Teod. Lector, *Hist., Eccl.* II, 53; Mal. *Chron.* p. 398 B; Theoph., *Chron* 5993; Josh., the Stylite, *Chron.* § 31; Evagr., *Hist.* 3-39-41; Zon., *Ann.* 14,3,11; Cedren., *Comp. Hist.*, 627 B; Const. Manasés, *Brev. Hist.*, v. 3083-99; Mich. the Syrian, *Chron.* 9,11; Niceph. Callist, *Hist. Eccl.*, 16,40. At the same time, the Codex Justinianus 11,1,1, refers to the abolition of the tax in one of Anastasios' constitutions written in Greek but does not mention the date when it was abolished: *Remittit omnibus penitus auri et argenti collationem, exceptis civitatibus et vicis, qui aliquid ex ultima voluntate ad ea conferenda accipiunt, vel si quid e publico huius collationis gratia datur. 1.- Qui autem hoc tributum praestant, eis liceat vel Constantinopoli vel in provincia id solvere et aut pro quarta parte in singulos annos aut quadriennio elapso sine damno et dispendio, 2.- Quod si quid supersit ex eo tributo, in necessarios sumptus civitatis expendatur, velut in opera aut annonam aut lumina similiae.*

<sup>31</sup> Jones II, 1964, 872 suggests that this was around 5% of the tax income. The only source that we have regarding the amounts generated by the Treasury is that of the city of Edessa, capital of the border province *Oshroene* (a region in Turkey that currently borders with Syria), and an important commercial centre at the time. In this city, the *negotiatores* had to pay 150 pounds of gold every four years at the end of the fifth century. Jones I, 1964, 465.

<sup>32</sup> Malal., *Chron.* p. 398 B.

kind of “nationalization” of the private possessions of the emperor, by placing the profits made from these assets at the State’s service and using them to satisfy, at last partially, the deficit built up in the public purse as a result of abolishing the *collatio*<sup>33</sup>.

## 7. The *solutio auraria* in Visigoth legislation

Anastasios’ abolition of the *collatio lustralis* was not applied in the West, since the Goth kings continued to collect the tax as they had done since the reign of Constantine. This is how the tax continued to exist in Italy paradoxically under the name of *auraria*<sup>34</sup>, and was even maintained by Justinian when he re-conquered Sicily and most of the Italian peninsula, although it had not been collected in Constantinople for decades.

Finally, we can end by saying that the *collatio lustralis* still survived in Visigothic Spain under the name of *solutio auraria*; it is mentioned with this title in the compendium of Alaricus<sup>35</sup> and was applied generally to all traders and craftsmen throughout *Hispania*<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Stein II, 1949, 206; Jones 1964 I, 237. On the other hand, Karayannopoulos 1958, 72-80 does not agree with the thesis of Stein; see also Capizzi 1969, 146.

<sup>34</sup> *Casiod., Variae* 2,26,30; Jones 1964 I, 257; Delmaire 1989, 257.

<sup>35</sup> Breviarium of Alaricus 13,1,1: *si quicumque rem, quae ei nata est aut quam non emit, vendat, ad solutionem aurariam minime teneatur. Si vero emendi vendendique studio probabitur huc illucque discurrere, etiamsi militans est, ad solutionem tenatur aurariam*, and in an interpretation of the CTh 13,3,13, it is said that *singuli quique, si per eos vernacula quaeque vendantur, functione auraria non teneantur: si vero emendi vendendive compendiis ultro citroque quaesitis familiaris rei amplitudo cumuletur etsi militares sint, memoratae praestationi nectantur*.

<sup>36</sup> Del Castillo 1991, 57ff. [p. 61].



# ON THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL STATUS OF THEATRE ACTORS IN LATE ANTIQUE LAW\*

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## 1.

Under the rubric *De scaenicis* in CTh. 15.7, a short administrative regime is detailed for the first time in Roman law on the social and legal status of actors. The regulations are laid out over thirteen constitutions spanning from the year 371 [367] to the year 413 AD<sup>1</sup>.

These regulations resulted in the forced registration by law of actors and actresses, as well as their sons and successors, as is deduced from CTh. 15.7.4 (*scaenica officia, ludicris ministeriis, vinculo naturalis condicionis*), CTh. 15.7.9 (*scaenica officia, ludicris ministeriis*) or CTh. 15.7.13 (*proprium officium*), where the acting profession is referred to as a compulsory social service that is protected to a certain extent by public

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<sup>1</sup> Soler 2009, 242: “La plupart des lois portent sur les conditions de libération des acteurs et sur leur rappel, ou le rappel de leurs enfants à la scène: ce sont les lois 1-2-4-8-9 et 13. Les lois 11 et 12 affirment la nécessité de protéger la sacralité des images impériales et les modèles chrétiens contre le jeu des actrices de mime sur les scènes et de protéger les images impériales dans les espaces publics contre leur juxtaposition avec celle de gens de spectacle. Enfin, un certain nombre de lois met en évidence la volonté de l’État d’assurer le financement et la pérennité des spectacles liés aux ludi et, en même temps, de plafonner les dépenses consacrées à l’organisation des jeux: les lois 3-5-6-7”. See also: Blänsdorf 1990, 261ff.; Del Genio 2008, 641ff.

authorities. According to CTh. 15.7.5, kidnapping and taking an actress (*thymelica*)<sup>2</sup> home for a private show was considered a punishable offence and could lead to a fine of five pounds of gold, *ita ut voluptatibus publicis non serviat*.

The imperial administration kept lists of actors and actresses who belonged to public guilds (*corpus scaenicorum*) as did the members of other professions, such as, for example, the bakers (*pistores*) who made the bread for public distribution or ship owners (*navicularii*)<sup>3</sup>. We therefore know that *scaenici* were not able to change their status and were destined to work in their shameful profession as actors for their whole lives under the control of the *praefectus urbi*<sup>4</sup> who, from the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century was assisted by the *tribunus voluptatum*, a civil servant with the dignity of *clarissimus*, who was in charge of controlling the moral content of theatrical performances<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *thymelicus* (musician) is used frequently in post-classical sources with a greater range of meaning, as a synonym of *scaenicus*. Musicians had been involved in the majority of Greek and Roman ceremonies for a long time (Liv., 9,30,5) and were excluded from infamy and equated to athletes (D. 3.2.4 pr.).

<sup>3</sup> We are aware that during the Republic and in the era of Principate actors and actresses used to be associated in imitation of the actors came from Greece in *sodalitates* or *collegia* for professional and religious reasons. In the Republic, there was a *synhodus magna psaltum* where actors were associated for funerary purposes and inscriptions dating from the imperial period demonstrate that various *collegia scaenicorum* were in existence (*collegium tibicinum romanorum*, *collegium fidicinum romanorum*, *collegium symphonicorum*...). In the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Roman citizens were still enthusiastic about theatre but free associations of actors and actresses are no longer documented. From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it was compulsory for the children of actors to follow in the footsteps of their parents and become actors too (*condicio nascendi*). Waltzing 1895[1968], 133; Liebenam 1890[1964], 121ff.; Gérard 1970, 309ff.; Jory 1970, 224ff.; Murga 1983, 566ff.; Le Guen 2001; Péché 2001, 307ff.; Pendón 2002; Perea 2004, 24ff.; Slater 2005, 316ff.

<sup>4</sup> The *praefectus urbi* was responsible for the good organization of public performances and customs control from the Principate according to D. 1.12.1.12 (Ulp., *de off. praef. urb.*): *Quies quoque popularium et disciplina spectaculorum ad praefecti urbi curam pertinere videtur*. Vid.: Chastagnol 1960, 265; Rucinsky 2009.

<sup>5</sup> The first time that this civil servant is documented in texts is in a law passed by Honorius in CTh. 15.7.13 and addressed to the proconsul of Africa in Carthage. The information that we have on the *tribunus* is essentially given to us by Cassiodorus who in *Variae* 7,10, under the title «*Formula tribuni voluptatum*», tells us about the regulations that governed the powers and jurisdiction of this civil

However, imperial legislation from the final third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by the doctrine of the Church Fathers and the Conciliar Canons<sup>6</sup>, allowed for certain circumstances under which actors and actresses could abandon their profession. In CTh. 15.7.1 (371 [367]), for example, Valentinian I declared that actors and actresses who, facing possible death due to illness, had freely sought the sacraments of the Church (*Dei summi sacramenta*) were exempt from having to return to the stage, establishing by law that the bishop (*antistites*) should verify that the actors conversion was real and that the provincial governor, or in his absence the *curator civitatis*, should ensure through investigators that the aforementioned actors were really *in extremis*, adding that, if at a later

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servant when it came to actors: (1) *Quamvis artes lubricae honestis moribus sint remotae et histrionum vita vaga videatur effferri posse licentia, tamen moderatrix providit antiquitas, ut in totum non effluerent, cum et ipsae iudicem sustinerent. Amministranda est enim sub quadam disciplina exhibitio voluptatum. Teneat scaenicos si non verus, vel umbralis ordo iudicii. Temperentur et haec legum qualitate negotia, quasi honestas imperet inhonestis, et quibusdam regulis vivant, qui viam rectae conversationis ignorant. Student enim illi non tantum iucunditatis suae, quantum alienae laetitiae et condicione perversa cum dominatum suis corporibus tradunt, servire potius animas compulerunt.* (2) *Dignum fuit ergo moderatorem suscipere, qui se nesciunt iuridica conversatione tractare. Locus quippe tuus his gregibus hominum veluti quidam tutor est positus. Nam sicut illi aetates teneras adhibita cautela custodiunt, sic a te voluptates fervidae impensa maturitate frenandae sunt. Age bonis institutis quod nimia prudentia constat invenisse maiores. Leve desiderium etsi verecundia non cohibet, districtio praenuntiata modificat. Agantur spectacula suis consuetudinibus ordinata, quia nec illi possunt invenire gratiam, nisi imitati fuerint aliquam disciplinam* (3) *Quapropter tribunum te voluptatum per illam indictionem nostra facit electio, ut omnia sic agas, quemadmodum tibi vota civitatis adiungas, ne quod ad laetitiam constat inventum, tuis temporibus ad culpas videatur fuisse transmissum. Cum fama diminutis salva tua opinione versare. Castitatem dilige, cui subiacent prostitutae: ut magna laude dicatur: "virtutibus studuit, qui voluptatibus miscebatur". Optamus enim ut per ludicram amministrationem ad seriam pervenias dignitatem.* Lim 1996, 163ff.; Quintana 2003, 310; Jiménez 2006, 131ff., 2007, 89ff., 2010, 201ff.

<sup>6</sup> In the first Council of Arles (314 AD) it was agreed that actors who had continued to perform after being baptized should be excommunicated. In canon 62 of Synod of Elvira, which was celebrated in Granada at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the same punishment was prescribed to charioteers and actors who had renounced their profession to convert to Christianity only to then continue to work in their profession.

See, Gaudemet 1958, 705; Jiménez 2010, 15ff.; Tinnfeld 1974, 323ff.

date, they should recover from their illness, they could no longer be called to the stage again (*si fortassis evaserint, nulla posthac in theatralis spectacula conventionione revocentur*)<sup>7</sup>. Seven months later, in CTh. 15.7.2, the same emperor stated that the daughters of actresses (*ex scaenicis natas*) would only be freed of their status if they could demonstrate that they led an honest life in accordance with the precepts of the Christian religion.

Valentinian I's policy was followed by his son, the emperor Gratian, who set forth in CTh. 15.7.4 (380) that actresses who had left the stage should return to the theatre unless their decision to leave was justified by their true conversion to the Christian faith. He went on to add in CTh. 15.7.9 (381) that actresses could also be freed from their profession upon the individual authorisation of the emperor himself<sup>8</sup>. It is also stated in CTh. 15.7.8 (381) that actresses that had converted to Christianity fraudulently and had obtained freedom *religionis nomine* but intended to continue performing, should be forcibly restored to their old status<sup>9</sup>.

In the legislation specified in CTh. 15.5 *De spectaculis* and CTh. 15.7 *De scaenicis* the traditional disrepute surrounding actors and actresses since the Republic is maintained and matters relating to theatrical performances and circuses is regulated with the same measures used to penalize prostitution. Actors, along with tavern keepers, were therefore assimilated with the *lenones* who ran brothels and were also considered infamous by law, with the Codex Theodosianus using

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<sup>7</sup> Hugoniot 1996, 550-555; French 1998a, 293ff.; Lim 2003, 84ff.; Soler 2007, 47ff.

<sup>8</sup> *...Illas etiam feminas liberatas contubernio scaenici praeiudicii durare praecipimus, quae mansuetudinis nostrae beneficio expertes muneris turpioris esse meruerunt*. However, in CTh. 15.7.13 (413) Honorius abolished the authorisations granted individually by emperors to actresses in a bid to avoid a possible shortage of actors and actresses "*festis diebus solitus ornatus deesse non possit*".

<sup>9</sup> Soler 2004, 254: "...les lois De scaenicis permettent d'appréhender un double processus contradictoire d'asservissement aux lieux de spectacle et de libération des gens de spectacle. L'État, à l'origine de ce double processus, fut confronté à la nécessité de maintenir les spectacles, au désir des gens de spectacle de devenir chrétiens et aux impératifs du droit canon relatifs à l'incompatibilité entre baptême et l'exercice de la scène ou du cirque. Dans ce double mouvement de libération et de asservissement, l'État fut de plus en plus soumis aux décisions de l'Église relatives à l'octroi du baptême et donc à la libération des gens de spectacle de leur munus".

expressions such as “...*vulgarem vitam...*” (CTh. 15.7.2) or “...*inhonestas personas...*” (CTh. 15.7.12) to refer to actors in general<sup>10</sup>.

The bad reputation that followed actresses is also evident in CTh. 15.7.11 (393), where it is textually forbidden for mime actresses to wear precious stones (*gemmis*), silk dresses decorated with figures (*serica sigillata*), embroidered with gold (*textis auratis*) or dyed with the pure purple colour (*holouera*) reserved for the emperor and his family only<sup>11</sup>. In CTh. 15.7.12 it is also stated that actresses should not wear dresses similar to those worn by virgins who had dedicated themselves to God<sup>12</sup>.

We should also bear in mind that this was a time when classical Greek theatre, and in particular tragedy, had lost a considerable degree of popularity whilst in eastern cities such as Antioch or Constantinople in there was a sudden increase in smaller performances that represented scenes from everyday life in a comical way, myths or even staged parodies of Christians<sup>13</sup>. In this context, we are able to better understand the role that the Church Fathers had in the fight against theatrical performances in general<sup>14</sup>. Particular attention should be paid to the influence that the homilies of St John Chrysostom<sup>15</sup>, Patriarch of Constantinople, had on Arkadios’ legislation in this area, as is demonstrated in a constitution documented in CTh. 2.8.23 (399)<sup>16</sup>, in which it is forbidden for any theatrical or circus performance to take place on a Sunday (*dominicus*

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<sup>10</sup> Serrigny 1862, 316; Biondi 1952, 279ff.; Edwards 1997, 66ff.; Neri 1998, 233-250; Vespignani 1999, 1ff.

<sup>11</sup> Despite their bad reputation, actresses enjoyed popularity and were often sponsored by important figures. For this reason laws were promulgated that stated that they could not wear luxurious dresses or jewels that were reserved for the emperor’s family or the *honestiores*. Pasquato 1976, 234ff.; Sallmann 1990, 268; Soler 2004, 254-255.

<sup>12</sup> Soler 2004, 256.

<sup>13</sup> Soler 2004, 251ff. See also, Vogt 1931, 259ff.; Morfadakis 1985, 205ff.

<sup>14</sup> Ambros., *Exam.*, 3,5; August., *Civ. Dei*, 6,7; August., *Cons. Evang.*, 1,33. Eriau 1914; Weismann 1972; Jürgens 1972; Schnusenberg 1988; Saggiaro 1999; Rapisarda 1996, 286ff.; Webb 2008, 197ff.; Del Genio 2008, 644-645.

<sup>15</sup> *Adversus eos qui ecclesia relicta ad circenses ludos et ad theatra transfugerunt* (P. G., 56, 263-270). Pasquato 1976, 107; Theocharidis 1940; Vandenberghe 1955, 34ff.; Lugaresi 2008; Jacob 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Various laws had established previously that the celebration of performances on days dedicated to Christian festivals was strictly forbidden (CTh. 15.5.2; CTh. 2.8.20). Mosna 1969; Di Berardino 2002, 97ff.; Di Berardino 2003, 211-232; Spineto 2005, 221-223.

*dies*), except for those organised to celebrate the emperor's birthday<sup>17</sup>. In CTh. 15.6.2 = C. 11.41.4, Arkadios forbade the celebration of the *maïuma* festival, a performance of choreographies by actresses in water<sup>18</sup>. In a similar way, CTh. 15.7.12 = C. 11.41.4 (394) documents a law directed at Rufinus, praetorian prefect of the East, that states that theatrical performances could only be advertised in the *proscenium* of theatres and that paintings of actors or charioteers could not be hung in porticos and other public places "with the aim of protecting the sacred nature of the images of the emperors located *in loco honesto*".

## 2.

The ill repute of actors so evident in post-classical legislation is nothing new if we bear in mind that already in the Republic, in addition to being tainted with dishonour<sup>19</sup>, actors were not allowed to access the

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<sup>17</sup> *Die dominico, cui nomen ex ipsa reverentia inditum est nec ludi teatrales nequorum certamina nec quicquam, quod ad molliendos animos repertum est, spectaculorum in civitate aliqua celebretur. Natalis vero imperatorum, etiamsi die dominico inciderit, celebretur.*

<sup>18</sup> *Post alia: ludicras artes concedimus agitari, ne ex nimia harum restrictione tristitia generetur. Illud vero quod sibi nomen procax licentia vindicavit, maïumam, foedum adque indecorum spectaculum, denegamus.* Pasquato 1976, 131ff.; Caimi 1984-1985, 49ff.; Gaggioti 1989-1990, 231ff.; Traversari 1960; Berlan-Bajard 2006.

<sup>19</sup> In his commentary of the edict, the jurist Salvius Julianus relates the bad reputation of actors from the first time they perform on stage (D.3.2.1; Iul., 1 <dig>: *Praetoris verba dicunt: infamia notatur (...) qui artis ludicrae pronuntiandive causa in scaenam prodierit*). On the other hand, in D.3.2.4 pr. (Ulp., 6 ed.), Ulpianus, following Sabinus and Cassius, refers to actors as *qui in scaenam prodierint* that is to say, those who act on stage as opposed to those who are not considered to be theatrical artists such as athletes (*athletas*), musicians (*thymelici*), fighters (*xystici*) or charioteers in the circus (*agitatores*), who are referred to as *qui artem ludicram non facere* and therefore are not considered infamous. In this commentary on the provincial edict, Gaius also tells us that a man who is hired to perform (*operas suas locavit*) and does not end up acting on stage was not considered a disgrace (D. 3.2.3). According to a rescript from Diocletian and Maximian in C. 2.11.21 (294), underage artists were also exempt from the bad reputation suffered by actors: *Si fratres tui minores dumtaxat aetate in ludicrae artis ostentatione spectaculum sui populo praebuerunt, inviolatam existimationem obtinent: vid., Prospero Valenti 1985, 71ff.*

However, the doctrine questions whether the true reason behind the bad reputation of actors was that they acted on stage or that they were paid for their

Senate and the magistratures. At a municipal level, we see in line 122 of the *Tabula Heracleensis* that they are excluded from the *ordo decurionum* and other municipal duties such as those of the *duumviri* or *quattuorviri* (*lanistaturam artemve ludicram fecit fecerit*). Actors were also not allowed to become part of legions as is implicit in Livy (7,2,12)<sup>20</sup>, with the death penalty established during the Empire for any soldier exercising the *ars ludicra* as is seen in D. 48.19.14<sup>21</sup>. Another measure adopted against actors towards the end of the Republic, according to the majority option following Mommsen's doctrine<sup>22</sup>, would be the possibility that their status was changed by the censor of the rustic tribe that they had initially belonged to, moving them to an urban tribe – mainly the Esquilina tribe – since, as we know, the votes of urban tribes had less political weight in elections<sup>23</sup>.

Suetonius (*August*, 45,3) also mentions the fact that actors had limited rights within the field of criminal law since magistrates with the power of *coercitio* could, at their discretion, order that actors be subjected to *verberatio* at any time and place without being able to appeal to the public.

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activities (they would have received considerable remuneration), according to texts such as D. 3.2.2.5 *in fine* which documents the opinions of the jurists Pegasus and Nerva filius, for whom actors who are paid for their work on stage should be deemed infamous. In D. 3.2.4 pr., Ulpianus, as we have already seen, refers to the Sabinus and Cassius' similar points of view in that they understand that athletes do not exercise performing arts in any form since their activities are carried out to demonstrate their value and strength (*virtutis gratia*). Leppin 1992, 70; Spruit 1966, 254, 1971, 580-581; Ducos 1990, 27; Amelotti 1955, 125; Franciosi 2007, 437ff.; Frank 1931, 11-20; Michel 1998, 90ff.; Hugoniot 2004, 213ff..

<sup>20</sup> Edwards 1993, 102; Blanch 2011b, 39.

<sup>21</sup> ...*nam si miles artem ludicram fecerit vel in servitutum se venire passus est, capite puniendum Menander scribit.*

<sup>22</sup> Mommsen 1889 [1985], 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> Leppin 1992, 73 clarifies that this supposition has a weak ground since we also have knowledge of different sources of *histrioni* enrolled in rustic tribes. On the other hand, Command 1999, 105 highlights that actors were taken from their tribes and placed amongst the *aerarii* (citizens who were not registered in a tribe and were deprived of the right to vote and exempt from military service); although Ducos 1990, 21 is adamant that we have no proof that actors belonged to the *aerarii*. However, we can add here that, according to the common opinion of the doctrine, actors would not lose the right to vote but their vote would not be worth much for the *civitas* bearing in mind the sheer number of citizens belonging to urban tribes. See also: Savino 2004, 163ff.; López 2008, 282ff.

However, Augustus limited this power of *coercitio* to the duration of a particular play and declared that it had to be carried out on the same stage. The sheer age of this measure is evident through its documentation in Plautus and in the works of imperial historians such as Tacitus (1,77) and Suetonius (*August.*, 45,3) it is clear that it was still very much present in their era.

The situation in which actors found themselves worsened during the Principate since the discrimination they suffered in the Republic were emphasised in social and legal spheres. Tacitus (1,77,4) tells us that Roman gentlemen were not allowed to be seen in the street with actors and that, at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, a *senatusconsultum* decreed that senators were not allowed to attend *scaenae* that had been set up inside private homes to watch pantomimes. During the era of Tiberius (4,14,3) and Nero (13,25), we also know that actors were often expelled from the city of Rome and even from Italy<sup>24</sup>. In addition, the *lex Iulia de vi publica* made it possible for actors to be denied the right to appeal to the Prince as Paulus tells us in *Sent.* 5.2<sup>25</sup>, whilst the *lex Iulia iudiciorum publicorum* (D. 48.2.4; Ulp., 2 *de adult.*) denied them of the *ius accusandi* in public cases unless it was related to the death of one of their sons, their patron or a crime of which they themselves had been victim. The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and, later on, the *lex Papia Poppaea* forbade senators, their children, and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren on the paternal side from marrying actresses or the daughters of actresses as stated in D. 23.2.44 pr.-1. In number 7 of this fragment, we see that if a senator's wife started to practice performing arts she should be repudiated by her husband. The *lex Iulia de adulteriis* also stated that a husband was allowed to kill an actor if he was caught in adulterous activity with his wife (D. 48.5.25(24) pr.)<sup>26</sup>.

In the post-classical period, the legal impediments that had been implemented in the past were maintained when it came to marriages

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<sup>24</sup> André 1975, 468ff.; Gourdet 2004, 307ff.

<sup>25</sup> Neither could they *postulare pro alio* (D. 3.1.1.5; Ulp., 6 *ad ed.*), nor be represented in court by a *cognitor* or indeed carry out this function themselves (Lenel, *Das Edictum Perpetuum*<sup>3</sup>, tit. VI§16; VIII§25).

<sup>26</sup> *Marito quoque adulterum uxoris suae occidere permittitur, sed non quemlibet, ut patri: nam hac lege cavetur, ut liceat viro deprehensum domi suae (non etiam soceri) in adulterio uxoris occidere eum, qui leno fuerit quive artem ludicram ante fecerit in scaenam saltandi cantandive causa prodierit iudiciove publico damnatus neque in integrum restitutus erit ...* Cantarella 1972, 265; Panero 2001, 166-168, 176.



between actresses and members of the senatorial order. In a constitution from the year 336, documented in CTh. 4.6.3 (and with some variations in C. 5.27.1)<sup>27</sup>, Constantine implicitly forbids actresses and their daughters from marrying senators or any other high-level dignitaries such as the *perfectissimi*, *duumviri*, *duumviri quinquennales*, *flamines* or the *sacerdotii provinciales*. If such marriages took place, he punished them with dishonour, taking away their Roman citizenship and denying that these unions had the same value as other marriages, for example, when it came to the legitimacy of any children. It is also stated in the law that any possessions that had been given to an actress or children created with an actress in a legal act should be returned to legitimate descendants of the senator. This matrimonial impediment is documented in Martianus' Nov. 4.2 (454) and also in C. 5.5.7: *...scaenicam vel scaenicae filiam ... ideoque huiusmodi inhibuisse nuptias senatoribus harum feminarum, quas nunc enumeravimus*.

At a later date, though a rescript referred to in C. 5.4.23.1-8 (520-523), the emperor Justin allowed actresses who had abandoned their profession and, from that moment onwards, had led an honest life to seek social rehabilitation from the emperor so that they could enter legal matrimony, become an heir and grant a will<sup>28</sup>. In Nov. 117.6 (542), Justinian does not only repeal the legislation passed by the emperor Constantine, mentioned previously, but also improves the legal status of actresses in various imperial constitutions, such as those recorded in C. 5.4.29 (530) and C. 1.4.33 pr. (534) which state that no free woman or slave can be led to the stage against her will, nor that the manager of a group of actors or any other person, who as a *fideiussor*, could guarantee their performance, nor agree before third parties that the actress could not give up her profession in order to marry legitimately, for example<sup>29</sup>. Provincial governors and bishops were put in charge of ensuring that these rulings were complied

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<sup>27</sup> Falcao 1973, 52ff.; Domingo 1989, 33-36; Beaucamp 1990, 206ff.; Evans Grubbs 1995, 284ff.; Laurence 2009, 159ff.

<sup>28</sup> Without this rescript on rehabilitation, his nephew Justinian would not have been able to marry Theodora, who had previously been a theatre actress.

<sup>29</sup> These improvements, for example those relating to *ius capiendi* and marriage (C. 6.51.1), referred to actresses who had abandoned their profession. At Justinian time, it was thought that actors in general were still an inferior social class. We see that they were forbidden from becoming senators and disinheriting offspring was allowed if they went into acting. Justinian also forbade clergymen from attending any theatrical performance (C. 1.4.34.3; Nov. 123.10). Daube 1967, 380ff.; Spruit 1977, 412.

with and of sanctioning those who did not meet these requirements by confiscating their possessions or sending them into exile. The latter punishment could also be brought upon the governor himself if he committed any of these offences. Shortly afterwards, in the year 536, Justinian published Nov. 51 (ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΤΑΣ ΕΠΙ ΣΚΗΝΗΣ ΜΗΤΕ ΕΓΓΥΗΝ ΜΗΤΕ ΟΡΚΟΝ ΑΠΑΙΤΕΙΣΘΑΙ ΠΡΟΣΕΔΡΕΙΑΣ)<sup>30</sup> which he confirms the contents of the previous constitutions, declaring that any oath that obliged actresses to not abandon their profession was no longer valid. Anyone who demanded such an oath was also fined of ten pounds of gold and had to hand this amount in to the governor of the province of the actress herself. Finally, the law stated that the governor and his heirs would pay with their own possessions for any errors committed when it came to their obligation to protect actresses.

We now conclude our article by saying that “after centuries of discrimination, Justinian was the first emperor to intervene in the legislation of previous centuries in order to restore the legal and social status of *scaenicae* so that he could marry Theodora, an ex-actress”<sup>31</sup>. For this reason, Justinian barely touched upon the constitutions gathered in CTh. 15.7 (*de scaenicis*).

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<sup>30</sup> *Scaenicas non solum si fideiussorem praestent, sed etiam si iusiurandum dent, sine periculo discedere.*

<sup>31</sup> Del Genio, 2008, 661.

# THE FANATIC IS A FAN IN A MADHOUSE: URBAN PIRACY AND THE ROMAN CIRCUS

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John Malalas offers a curious account occurring at the end of the reign of Justinian concerning circus factions – in Greek, δῆμοι<sup>1</sup>. Although he is rated as a bad historian, as A. H. M. Jones stated, he was at least an author with a single and important virtue: he was contemporary to the events taking place under the emperors Justin and Justinian<sup>2</sup>. Around the year 565 the chronicler informed about a severe incident concerning the Green faction because of the decision of Zemarchos<sup>3</sup>, the City Prefect of Constantinople, of arresting a man called Kaisarios in the quarter of Mazentios. This decision provoked a serious popular revolt that, although it wasn't as grave as the former Nika uprising, implied many deaths in faction members and soldiers who were ordered to suppress them. The rebellion became widespread as it advanced to the city Forum, the Tetracylon and the *praetorium* of the city prefect. The insurgency lasted till Zemarchos was substituted by a new prefect, the former *magister scriniorum* Julian, who behaved ruthlessly against both factions during “a period of ten months, burning, impaling, castrating and dismembering them, for he realised that they were murderers and boldly carried out highway assaults robberies, brigandage and piracy (καὶ ληστείας καὶ πειρατείας)”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning circus factions, their features, characteristics, motivations and activities see Bury, 1897, Greatrex, 1997, whose papers are focused on the Nika revolt and above all the extraordinary work of A. Cameron, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, 1964, 267. Factional conflict became perennial in eastern Mediterranean during Late Antiquity. *E.g.* there were serious problems under Zeno and Anastasios, Haarer, 2006, 223-229. A complete account in Cameron, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> *PLRE* 3, 1416.

<sup>4</sup> John Malalas *Chron.* 18.151 (496): ἐξαιρέτως τοῖς τοῦ πρασίνου μέρους, πικρῶς ἐπὶ μῆνας ἑ' καὶ προσκαίων καὶ κοντεύων καὶ ἀποτέμνων καὶ παρὰ μέλη ποιῶν

This testimony is a very interesting one because of several reasons. First of all, Malalas defies a long established fixed idea mainly by Alan Cameron in his masterpiece “Circus factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium”<sup>5</sup>. This scholar asserted that factions’ violent activities were just limited to the circus sphere, this is, to the sporting circle<sup>6</sup>. The second reason is that their violence could affect more objectives than the rival faction or the authorities, and in fact it is described throughout as pure *latrocinium* directed to the entire populace. The third point is the base of this paper: factions were also accused of practising piracy. Urban piracy<sup>7</sup>.

Although most ancient people were fond of circus games and there were four colours who competed on the races – Whites, Reds, Blues and Greens –, just the last two of them counted for anything, had huge popular support and were cheered by hundreds of violent followers<sup>8</sup>. These extreme supporters, known as factions, were just a minority of the fandom at the circus and were permanently fighting each other. These wild bunches were present empire-wide, wherever a city had a circus, and can be deemed in a sense as the equivalent to today’s football hooligans<sup>9</sup> but, definitively, in terms of the security of ancient society, much more dangerous than their contemporary counterparts, as the texts show.<sup>10</sup> They were especially dangerous during their disruptive and traumatic revolts named as *bellum plebeium* or δημοικήμάχη in the sources. Unfortunately, most ancient sources just concentrate on these important upheavals and less on their everyday activities, their criminal activities, except some authors besides Malalas<sup>11</sup>.

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αὐτοῦς, εὐρίσκων αὐτοῦς φονεῖς ὄντας καὶ ἐφόδους εἰς ὁδοὺς καὶ ἀρπαγὰς τολμῶντας καὶ ληστείας καὶ πειρατείας, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐναρμολοσάμενος αὐτοῖς, ὡς ἐχρῆν. Translation by Jeffreys, Jeffreys & Scott, *Chronicle*. Information from this revolt also appear on Victor Tunnunnensis *Chron.* 565/566.2 and Corippus *Iust.* 4.3-7. On Julian see *PLRE* 3, 735-736

<sup>5</sup> Cameron, 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Cameron, 1976, 28. Followed by Greatrex, 1997, 62.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning piracy in Late Antiquity, see my still unpublished thesis. Although I focused mainly on the western Mediterranean basin and the Atlantic shores, I also studied piracy in the eastern Mediterranean from the third till the eighth centuries. Álvarez Jiménez, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> An useful introduction to Roman Circus in Futrell 2006, 189-217.

<sup>9</sup> Cameron 1976, 270, 293-294. Greatrex 1997, 64.

<sup>10</sup> See in next pages a comparison between both realities.

<sup>11</sup> The same goes for modern historians. Their focus is permanently on these outbursts and not on their everyday violence. One exception is Wolfgang

Above all, Prokopios in his *Secret History* provided the most interesting and vivid portrait of the factions, of these truly sub-urban cultures whose lives were centred on the circus, through an extraordinary tale that must be placed on his harsh diatribe against the emperor Justinian, who, together with his wife Theodora, was a huge supporter of the Blues<sup>12</sup>. Although John Malalas' story is linked to the Greens and Prokopios' emphasis is placed on the Blues, the features described by the later on his *Secret History* are extremely valuable to understand and depict both factions. In fact, even if his bias against the Blues is evident, he also stated that the Greens acted in a similar way but they were punished comparatively more severely<sup>13</sup>. In his *Bellum Persicum* Prokopios defined factions on this way:

“In every city the population has been divided for a long time past into the Blue and the Green factions; but within comparatively recent times it has come about that, for the sake of these names and the seats which the rival factions occupy in watching the games, they spend their money and abandon their bodies to the most cruel tortures, and even do not think it unworthy to die a most shameful death. And they fight against their opponents knowing not for what end they imperil themselves, but knowing well that, even if they overcome their enemy in the fight, the conclusion of the matter for them will be to be carried off straightway to the prison, and finally, after suffering extreme torture, to be destroyed. So there grows up in them against their fellow men a hostility which has no cause, and at no time does it cease or disappear, for it gives place, neither to the ties of marriage nor of relationship nor of friendship, and the case is the same even though those who differ with respect to these colours be brothers or any other kin. They care neither for things divine nor human in comparison with conquering in these struggles; and it matters not whether a sacrilege is committed by anyone at all against God, or whether the laws and the constitution are violated by friend or by foe; nay even when they are perhaps ill supplied with the necessities of life, and when their fatherland is

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Liebeschuetz, but even he just referred such behaviour in passing as he said that “[factions] also displayed many characteristics of gangsters and organised crime”. Liebeschuetz 2001, 218, and also p. 213 n. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Prokopios *HA* 9.33: “for both being members of the Blue Faction from of old, they gave the members of this Faction [the Blues] great freedom regarding the affairs of State”; ἄμφω γὰρ μοίρας τῆς Βενέτων ἐκ παλαιοῦ ὄντες ἐν πολλῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τούτοις δὴ τοῖς στασιώταις τὰ ἐς τὴν πολιτείαν πράγματα ἔθεντο. Translation by Dewing, 1969. See also Evagrius Scholastikos *HE* 4.32 and John of Nikiu *Chron.* 90-16.

<sup>13</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.4-5.

in the most pressing need and suffering unjustly, they pay no heed if only it is likely to go well with their ‘faction’... so that I, for my part, am unable to call this anything except a disease of the soul (ψυχῆς νόσημα)<sup>14</sup>.

But as it has been referred above, it is in his *Secret History* where Prokopios offered the most relevant information about faction’s ψυχῆς νόσημα, their behaviour and *modus operandi*. Apparently, there were social differences between Greens and Blues beyond their sporting identities. The historiographical cliché says that while the Greens were more linked to the lower classes, the Blues were supported by the higher ones and many of the emperors, as the very Justinian<sup>15</sup>. However, this seems an archetypical division, since we know that there were also many emperors fond of the Green faction, as well as many other members of the highest status. Anastasios was the only emperor who defied this duality as he declared himself as a Red supporter and, in consequence, didn’t have any kind of loyalty to the circus duopoly or their noisy hooligans<sup>16</sup>. As the

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<sup>14</sup> Prokopios *BP* 1.24.1-6: οἱ δῆμοι ἐν πόλει ἐκάστη ἐξ τε Βενέτους ἐκ παλαιοῦ καὶ Πρασίνους διήρητο, οὐ πολλὸς δὲ χρόνος ἐξ οὗ τούτων τε τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ τῶν βάρων ἔνεκα, οἷς δὴ θεώμενοι ἐφεστήκασι, τὰ τε χρήματα δαπανῶσι καὶ τὰ σώματα αἰκισμοῖς πικροτάτοις προΐενται καὶ θνήσκειν οὐκ ἀπαξιοῦσι θανάτῳ αἰσχίστῳ· μάχονται δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀντικαθισταμένους, οὔτε εἰδότες ὅτου αὐτοῖς ἔνεκα ὁ κίνδυνός ἐστιν, ἐξεπιστάμενοι τε ὡς, ἦν καὶ περιέσονται τῶν δυσμενῶν τῇ μάχῃ, λελείπεται αὐτοῖς ἀπαχθῆναι μὲν αὐτίκα ἐς τὸ δεσμοτήριον, αἰκίζομενοὶ δὲ τὰ ἔσχατα εἶτα ἀπολωλένα. φύεται μὲν οὖν αὐτοῖς τὸ ἐς τοὺς πέλας ἔχθος αἰτίαν οὐκ ἔχον, μένει δὲ ἀτελεύτητον ἐς τὸν πάντα αἰῶνα, οὔτε κήδει οὔτε ξυγγενεῖα οὔτε φιλίας θεσμῶ εἶκον, ἦν καὶ ἀδελφοὶ ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον οἱ ἐς τὰ χρώματα ταῦτα διάφοροι εἶεν. μέλει τε αὐτοῖς οὔτε θεῖον οὔτε ἀνθρωπεῖον πραγμάτων παρὰ τὸ ἐν τούτοις νικᾶν, ἦν τέ τι ἀσέβημα ἐς τὸν θεὸν ὑφ’ ὅτου οὖν ἀμαρτάνηται ἦν τε οἱ νόμοι καὶ ἡ πολιτεία πρὸς τῶν οἰκείων ἢ τῶν πολεμίων βιάζονται, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων σπανίζοντες ἴσως κἂν τοῖς ἀναγκαιοτάτοις ἀδικουμένης αὐτοῖς τῆς πατρίδος, οὐ προσποιῶνται, ἦν γε αὐτοῖς κείσθαι τὸ μέρος ἐν καλῷ μέλλῃ· οὕτω γὰρ τοὺς συστασιώτας καλοῦσι... ὥστε οὐκ ἔχω ἄλλο τι ἐγῶγε τοῦτο εἰπεῖν ἢ ψυχῆς νόσημα. Translation by Dewing, 1961. On factions, see also Anonymous *Dialogue on Political Science* 5.103-115.

<sup>15</sup> Manojlovic 1936, followed by many scholars as Patlagean, 1977. Cameron 1976, 95-101 replied vigorously against any difference between social classes and factions. However, there is ground to believe that this division could be real originally. In fact, this kind of divergence happens in contemporary football but this fact doesn’t mean that all these supporters belong to the same social status even if their clubs are identified with an archetype we are not sure to understand in Byzantine times according to the nature of the sources.

<sup>16</sup> John Malalas *Chron.* 16.1. Cameron 1976, 71-72, Greatrex 1997, 66.

very Prokopios wrote, these gangs made up mainly by youngsters<sup>17</sup> from every social class, but predominantly from the lower ones<sup>18</sup>, wore distinctive signs such as particular hairstyles and flamboyant clothes they named “hunnish style”, and as well big beards and moustaches styled as Persian<sup>19</sup>. As Alan Cameron said, all of these signs “are a time-honoured form of group identification among the young”<sup>20</sup> as it can be seen on any historical age, including ours. They were also armed<sup>21</sup>, defying the prohibition of carrying weapons<sup>22</sup>, always in group, and were active mainly whenever was dark due to the authorities’ inaction. However, under Justinian rule their confidence was so great that Blues dared to attack people in broad daylight. Although their first victims were associated to the Greens, afterwards every other person could be assailed and even some people hired faction members as thugs to perform selective murders<sup>23</sup>. As Prokopios said “the wrongdoers had no need to conceal their crimes, for no dread of punishment lay upon them, nay, there even grew up a sort of zest for competitions among them, since they got up exhibitions of strength and manliness”<sup>24</sup>

On this way, in parallel with John Malalas and Prokopios’ testimonies, the also contemporary Evagrios Scholastikos handed down this interesting evidence:

“Not only did they not fear penalties, but they were even granted rewards, so that many men therefore became assassins. They were also able to attack houses and plunder the valuables stored inside and to sell people their personal safety... they lay in wait for travellers, committing robberies

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<sup>17</sup> As Alan Cameron said brightly, there is a connection between the end of the Roman *collegia iuvenum* and the strengthening of the circus factions at the Late Antiquity, even if these existed from the Republican times. Cameron 1976, 77 and 79, also in 99-100. On this, see also Eyben 1993, 87-91.

<sup>18</sup> Although it can seem anachronistic and biased, I consider that Tacitus’ description of Roman plebs can be applied to Late Antiquity: “the lowest classes, addicted to the circus and theatre”, *plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta*; Tacitus *Hist.* 1.4. However, on the participation of youngsters belonging to the higher classes in the factions see also Bell, 2013, 136-138.

<sup>19</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.8-14.

<sup>20</sup> Cameron, 1976, 76-77.

<sup>21</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.15. Cameron 1976, 123.

<sup>22</sup> On this prohibition and its limits during the Later Roman Empire, see Álvarez Jiménez 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.25-36.

<sup>24</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.27-28.

and murders so that everywhere was filled with untimely deaths and plundering and other crimes”<sup>25</sup>.

These three contemporary sources – and more important John Malalas and Prokopios who were direct witnesses of these events – agreed basically on their accusations to the Blue and Green factions of practising criminality against their fellow citizens and in diverse ways<sup>26</sup>. On John Malalas’ accusation of piracy, Prokopios gives worthy information as he is the only author who described a piratical attack carried out by factions:

“It is said that one woman, dressed in elegant fashion, was crossing with her husband to some suburb on the opposite mainland; and in the course of this crossing they were met by some of the Factionists, who tore her from her husband with a threat and placed her in their own boat; and as she entered the boat with the young men, she stealthily urged her husband to be of good courage and to fear no harm for her; for, she said, she would not suffer any outrage to her person. And even while her husband looked upon her in great sorrow, she threw herself into the sea and straightway vanished from among men”<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Evagrius Scholastikos *HE* 4.32: μη μόνον ποινὰς μη δεδιέναι ἀλλὰ καὶ γερωῶν ἀξιοῦσθαι, ὡς πολλοὺς ἀνδροφόνους ἐντεῦθεν γενέσθαι. Ἐξῆν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς οἴκοις ἐπιέναι καὶ τὰ ἐναποκείμενα κειμήλια ληΐζεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰς σφῶν πιπράσκειν σωτηρίας... τοῖς ὁδοιποροῦσιν ἐφῆδρευον λωποδυσίας τε καὶ μαιφονίας ἐργαζόμενοι, ὡς πάντα πλήρη θανάτων ἁρώρων ληλασίας τε καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀτοπημάτων εἶναι. Translated by Walford, 1896.

<sup>26</sup> There is a later reference which emphasizes this view concerning Blues and Greens criminal deeds. Antiochus Strategos described the factions as follows in his tale of the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614: “They were named after the dress which they wore, and one faction was dubbed the Greens and the other the Blues. They were full of all villainy, and were not content with merely assaulting and plundering the faithful; but were banded together for bloodshed as well and for homicide. There was war and extermination ever among them, and they constantly committed evil deeds, even against the inhabitants of Jerusalem”. Translation by Conybeare, 1910.

<sup>27</sup> Prokopios *HA* 7.37-38: καὶ λέγεται γυνὴ μία κόσμον περιβεβλημένη πολὺν πλεῖν μὲν ξὺν τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἐπὶ τι προάστειον τῶν ἐν τῇ ἀντιπέρας ἠπείρῳ· ἐντυχόντων δὲ σφίσι ἐν τῷ διάπλῳ τούτῳ τῶν στασιωτῶν, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἀνδρὸς αὐτὴν ξὺν ἀπειλῇ ἀφαιρουμένων, ἐς δὲ ἄκατον τὴν οἰκίαν ἐμβιβασάντων, ἐσελθεῖν μὲν ἐς τὴν ἄκατον ξὺν τοῖς νεανίαις, ἐγκελευσαμένη τῷ ἀνδρὶ λάθρα ἀλλὰ θαρσεῖν τε καὶ μηδὲν ἐπ’ αὐτῇ δεδιέναι φαῦλον· οὐ γάρ τι ξυμβήσεσθαι ἐς τὸ σῶμα αὐτῇ ὑβρισθῆναι· ἔτι δὲ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ξὺν πένθει μεγάλῳ ἐς αὐτὴν βλέποντος ἕξ τε τὴν



This is the kind of activities referred by John Malalas as faction piracy, and there is no doubt that this episode is the maritime contrast to their earthly *latrocinium*<sup>28</sup>. Unfortunately it's the only one reference and some doubts arise. Was this attack the only one? And, was this episode so shocking to the Constantinopolitan population that it can be assumed that it is the origin of the contemporary global accusation of piracy? I refuse this idea. Ancient sources are characterised by their reluctance concerning banditry or piracy and, as David Braund said, reflecting their existence was “beneath the dignity of history”<sup>29</sup> but both activities were present on everyday life as we find traces in several sources that attest their reality<sup>30</sup>. Prokopios didn't mention any kind of piracy, except Vandal piracy, in his *Histories* but he did it in his *Secret History*, and obviously to intensify his bias against Justinian for support of the emperor to the Blues. That is, we can assume that factions operated criminally on a regular basis on earth and in the sea in the city of Constantinople at least. Concerning the nature of this maritime banditry, I divided in my thesis Mediterranean criminal piracy into two main types: professional, that is, persons who were grouped on gangs and dedicated only to piracy, and opportunistic piracy. Fishermen, merchants and, in this case, factions are classified into this last category. They didn't focus just on piracy, but whenever they judged they could take profit of a favourable situation they made sea attacks<sup>31</sup>. In sum, factioneers weren't fastidious about the areas where they could take action and more than probably piracy was a less important criminal activity than their earth based endeavours as they needed a more complex preparation, navigation skills, and resources, ships or boats and a secure landing place. In this way, this piratical activity was completely different and in a lesser scale, by comparison to the last time we hear about maritime banditry on these shores during the reign of the emperor Theodosios II, when the count Sebastian and his δορυφόρον operated in the Hellespont and the

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θάλασσαν καθεῖναι τὸ σῶμα καὶ αὐτίκα μάλα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀφανισθῆναι. Τοιαῦτα μὲν ἦν τὰ τούτοις δὴ τότε τοῖς στασιῷ ταις ἐν Βυζαντίῳ τετολμημένα.

<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately there is just another one extant reference to the factions and the sea and it's linked to Herakleios' *coup d'état* in 610. The Greens and the inhabitants of Byzantium, after accepting the rule of Herakleios pursued by sea the Blues, who were accused of supporting the former emperor. John of Nikiu *Chron.* 110.1-3.

<sup>29</sup> Braund 1993, 209.

<sup>30</sup> On late antique piracy, see Álvarez Jiménez 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Álvarez Jiménez 2010, 254-256.

Propontide<sup>32</sup>. While Sebastian's group was an authentic piratical *factio*, these factioneers simply executed their attacks opportunistically and bounded to their land background.

Concerning the setting of the attack, it is possible to deduce that this unfortunate couple was crossing the Golden Horn on their way to Sycae, the modern Galata and known on Byzantine time as the XIII Constantinopolitan region. Separated from the mainland of Constantinople by the Golden Horn, the communication between both areas was from old carried out by boats or small ships<sup>33</sup>. This was a perfect spot to execute this kind of piracy and, of course, largely by night because of the incessant maritime traffic of this sea corridor during daytime. Although we don't know any other detail concerning factionary piracy, beyond their use of boats or small ships, it's a long tradition of most pirates or piratical societies on ancient Mediterranean history to select those places favourable to practice their robberies and a strait like the Golden Horn was simply perfect. Likewise, it seems that factioneers took advantage of the insufficient security measures taken by the authorities to protect the city as the *praetori plebis*, the former *vigiles*, hardly had the resources to counter this kind of menace, although they were commanded to fight the Constantinopolitan criminality<sup>34</sup>. Also, there is no evidence that they could either control the city surrounding waters or that they used ships on their vigilance duties. In fact, it seems probable that they were incapable of fighting this kind of robbery. The only way was to do it whenever these piratical factioneers were on earth, after the *praetori* knew where their bases were placed. On this matter, the *latrones cognitores* – that is, informers or whistleblowers – could be crucial as they provided useful data to the authorities about these wrongdoers<sup>35</sup>. However, this reprisal was difficult and, as it can be deduced from Malalas, the knowledge of these activities – or the mere denounce – was obtained *a posteriori* after the revolt happened under the prefecture of Zemarchos. However, it's improbable that these piratical activities weren't known before, as the testimony of Prokopios shows, as his *Secret History* was published some

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<sup>32</sup> Álvarez Jiménez 2010, 328. Prisco *fr.* (Block.) 4 = Suda θ 145, Jordanes *Rom.* 320.

<sup>33</sup> Drakoulis 2012, 164. On these areas, see also Magdalino 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Justinian *Nov.* 13.

<sup>35</sup> Even though this figure was especially condemned in the Justinian legislation as *enim latronum cognitor tuis est, quomodo in bonum quid agere, sed in hoc ta. tummodo cognoscunt fures, ut Lucrum sibi et iudicibus suis venentur*, *Nov.* 13.4.

time before this uprising took place. Certainly Constantinopolitans were acquainted with this reality but the authorities did not put a lot effort in its suppression till they felt pressured to do so. However, in accordance with the scarce sources we have and their inability to provide other testimonies apart from the shocking rebellions, we cannot assure that these piratical exploits ended here. In fact, it is reasonable to affirm the contrary.

Concerning factions and in a straight contrast with the professional *praedo, latro, pirata* or Ληστής, they weren't pursued as organised groups unless their activities proved to be extremely disruptive or provoked huge urban revolts even if they committed such crimes as the ones showed by Prokopios, John Malalas and Evagrius. Of course, this reality doesn't mean that particular members of the factions weren't punished as the very ancient texts show, and some of these arrests and later chastisement were the cause of numerous outbreaks. However, in fact, although John Malalas told that the Prefect Julian fought back against them in consequence of the revolt and the later accusations of piracy and banditry, the factions continued acting as destabilizing factors, as it had happened as well after the previous and more dangerous Nika uprising. That is, as it will be discussed later, the factions played a role in the Byzantine Empire and the authorities didn't want to wipe them out at all in spite of their exploits. Of course, factions' criminal deeds weren't the only ones suffered by the cities during this period as Justinian's efforts for increasing security demonstrate<sup>36</sup>, but the official reprisals against factions as criminal organised groups were inexistent.

In contemporary times we have parallel cases similar to the circus factions. We can begin with the current urban tribes, gangs compound mainly of young persons and although present worldwide they are especially prominent on the most impoverished neighbourhoods of the United States of America and South America<sup>37</sup>. As it happens on these

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<sup>36</sup> Croke 2006, 71-72 and Evans 1996, 43. Concerning perennial criminality on the age of Justinian, see also Bell 2013, 109-110.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer M. Hazen offers a worthy insight concerning contemporary gangs. She distinguishes between several types of gangs, their relationship with the State, the role of violence etc. According to Hazen 2010, 373: "gangs are one of many social actors in a community. They can have a positive or negative impact on communities depending on the role they play. In some instances, they act as predators and generate fear and insecurity; in others, they offer a form of protection unavailable from existing state security forces. This does not imply that gangs are dangerous or benign, but that understanding gangs requires more than

urban tribes, in the circus factions we find persons who shared common codes of conduct, a well established hierarchy and a deep sense of shared identity and membership to a group that didn't admit the barriers or the social demands established in the ancient world. That is, factions stood away from the social coordinates while they took as their identity feature their colours and their violent behaviours. In fact, some of the most brutal contemporary football hooligans can be compared to the circus factions. In both cases, the love to their colours is the excuse to form and unite groups based on people coming from the most underprivileged classes and also to carry out truly criminal associations dedicated fundamentally in the case of current hooliganism to extortion, drug dealing and petty street criminality<sup>38</sup>. Although not implicitly, football hooligans are supported by

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assessing the threat that they pose". Likewise, she offers a definition of gangs that is very interesting to compare with ancient factions: "they are a predominantly urban phenomenon in larger cities, although they are now also found in smaller cities and non-urban areas. They tend to be groups that are marginalised from broader society. While a gang tends to be of a single ethnicity, no single ethnicity defines a gang. Gang members tend to be young, in the age range of 12 to 30. Gangs have long been assumed to be predominantly male though, while this is still true, evidence suggests that females are playing an increasing role in gangs. Most gangs are loosely organised and moderately cohesive, and those that are more cohesive tend to be more delinquent. Gangs rarely specialise in their offending; instead they engage in various delinquent acts, with violent crime being the least common activity. The longevity of a gang ranges from a few months to decades. The goals of gangs vary, but a key characteristic that distinguishes gangs from other non-state armed groups is that they do not seek to overthrow the state". Hazen 2010, 375-376.

<sup>38</sup> Concerning Spain, there are a lot of examples of football hooliganism linked to crime. The Casuals, an extremely violent group of F. C. Barcelona fans have been judged by drug dealing, contract killers, extortion, torture, multiple aggressions etc. (Carranco & García, 2013) In South America, football hooliganism is very extended on every country, and in a more violent way than in Europe. For example, in Argentina, the Argentinian "barras bravas" (Some of the most important are "La Doce", Boca Juniors; "Los Borrachos del Tablón", River Plate; "La Guardia Imperial", Racing Club de Avellaneda or "Los Diablos Rojos", Atlético Independiente) dedicate not just to cheer up their teams but also to extort their own teams and players, deal with drugs and, of course, fight their rivals (Santos Moya, 2012). The case of Argentina is a very interesting one because, as happened in the Roman Circus, some Argentinian politicians have used them as their own militia to get their own political benefits (see the report at the Newspaper *Clarín*:<http://edant.clarin.com/diario/especiales/violenciaenelfutbol/nota3/d-04602.htm>). An interesting book about hooliganism and crime is Sugden 2002. It

the football clubs' boards and a certain *laissez faire* by local authorities because of their constant support on the stadiums and the deep-rooted role of football in contemporary societies<sup>39</sup>. This sense of belonging presupposes automatically the conflict with the rivals' supporters as it happened in Antiquity<sup>40</sup>. Even Alan Cameron recognised that factions' violence couldn't originate exclusively from the circus enthusiasm even if he linked their activities just to this milieu<sup>41</sup>. However, there is a main problem regarding factions and a shared one concerning most people from ancient times: alterity<sup>42</sup>. We don't have any significant text from the factions themselves, except some remarks from Menander Protector who was also a factionist when he was young<sup>43</sup>, but fundamentally the testimonies come

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was recommended to me by Geoff Pearson, lecturer at the University of Liverpool and member of the Football Industry Group and researcher specialized on contemporary hooliganism. I'd like to thank deeply to Dr Pearson because of his invaluable help on this subject.

<sup>39</sup> While Karl Marx defined in the nineteenth century religion as "the opium of the people", in these days we can exchange religion with football and use the same sentence.

<sup>40</sup> This comparison between factions and modern hooligans is a long established one, e.g. Cameron 1976, 295-296. However, Whitby 1999, 231 and Liebeschutz 2001, 213-214, are right when they show doubts about this identification. Both phenomena respond to different realities, but there are enough points in common to suggest a historical parallel. As the great Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano wrote "The fanatic is a fan in a madhouse. His mania for denying all evidence finally upended whatever once passed for his mind, and the remains of the shipwreck spin about aimlessly in waters whipped by a fury that gives no quarter... He never comes alone. In the midst of the rowdy crowd, dangerous centipede, this cowed man will cow others, this frightened man becomes frightening. In an epileptic fit he watches the game but doesn't see it. His arena is the stands. They are his battleground. The mere presence of a fan of the other side constitutes an inexcusable provocation. Good isn't violent by nature, but Evil leaves it no choice. The enmity, always in the wrong, deserves a good thrashing. The fanatic cannot let his mind wander because the enemy is everywhere, even in that quiet spectator who at any moment might offer the opinion that the rival team is playing fair; then he'll get what he deserves". Galeano 2003, 8-9. This wonderful text inspired the title of this paper.

<sup>41</sup> Cameron 1976, 295-296.

<sup>42</sup> Whitby 1999, 234-235.

<sup>43</sup> Menander Protector *fr.* wrote that after he completed his studies on laws, "I neglected my career for the disgraceful life of an idle layabout. My interests were the gangs fights of the 'colours', the chariot races and the pantomimes, and I even entered the wrestling ring. I sailed with such folly that I not only lost my shirt but

from moralistic and/or upper-class sources<sup>44</sup>. In consequence, we don't know their reasons, thought, internal codes or justification.

Although the reckless independence of the circus factions and their criminal activities could be considered analogous to the bandits or pirates bands, that was not the case. Circus factions were tolerated and sometimes encouraged by the official power. They fulfilled a role in the political play and although it has been argued brightly that the Circus could be considered a place where popular masses could express more or less freely their unrest, that is, the social, political or economical grievances that affected most of the population as they could be heard by the emperor himself in Constantinople or the most important authorities<sup>45</sup>, public entertainments were used by the power to be praised and to spread the propaganda apparatus of the political regime. In this way, Factions led the cheering at the Circus and fulfilled a political role in the eastern cities and most of all in Constantinople<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, we cannot forget Juvenal's classical sentence of *panem et circenses*<sup>47</sup> and its later adaptation by Ostrogothic king Theoderic, who said regarding circus that "compelled by pressure from the people, I cherish the institution: such gatherings are what they pray for, while they delight in rejecting serious thoughts... the mob, rather, is led to what was plainly invented for oblivion of its cares"<sup>48</sup>.

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also my good sense and all my decency". Translation by R. C. Blockley 1985. Cameron 1976, 100.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. Prokopios *HA* 7.23: "Many young men also flocked to this association, men who previously had never taken an interest in these affairs, but were now drawn to it by the lure of power and the opportunity for wanton insolence"; και ἄλλοι δὲ νεανία πολλοὶ ἐς ταύτην δὴ τὴν ἑταιρίαν ξυνέρρειον οὐδεπώποτε πρότερον περὶ ταῦτα ἐσπουδακότες, ἀλλὰ δυνάμεώς τε καὶ ὕβρεως ἐξουσίᾳ ἐνταῦθα ἡγμένοι.

<sup>45</sup> As MacMullen, 1966, 172 wrote, most of the population didn't have any other option to be heard than using these public entertainments. In fact, as Tacitus *Hist.* 1.72 said, the masses enjoyed some impunity to explain their unrest. See also Greatrex, 1997, 80-83. Concerning the informal support given by the authorities to the circus factions, I follow Cameron, 1976, 170-185 & 293-294.

<sup>46</sup> Cameron, 1976, Liebeschuetz, 2001, 208-210 and 213-218. On this, see also Whitby, 1999, who argued that the factions' survival lied in their use carried by powerful patrons.

<sup>47</sup> Juvenal *Sat.* 10.81. However, on this matter see de Ste Croix, 1989, 371-372 and Kyle, 1998, 8-9.

<sup>48</sup> Translated by Barnish, 2006. Cassiodorus *Var.* 3.51.12: *haec nos fovemus necessitate populorum imminantium, quibus votum est ad talia convenire, dum cogitationes serias delectantur abjicere... et ad illud potius turba ducitur, quod ad curarum remissionem constat inventum.*

On this subject, Isidore of Pelusium offers an admirable variant on the topic of “bread and circus”. He affirmed in a letter that circus served as an instrument of social control on Roman society as this was accustomed to peace and leisure and so to avoid any rupture on internal peace:

“The rulers considered it necessary to lop off the root of insurrections and, so as not to permit themselves the prospect of a war on two fronts – one external and the other domestic – they devised this very preoccupation who were wont to dare anything in a spirit of recklessness. They have given them a pretext for rivalry to the extent that, not being able to destroy anything, it can nonetheless exhaust the violent passions around itself. What I am referring to are the following: the relentless chariot races (a civil struggle of sorts!), which attract to this very contest men who had no desire to do anything practical but would indeed consider useful occupation something quite grievous; the varied entertainment on the dancing floor of the theatre, which amuses some with sights and beguiles other with sounds, appears to be a hindrance to the plotting of national insurrection even though it is filled with evil”<sup>49</sup>

This statement, which reminds to Dio Cassius’ dialogue between Agrippa and Maecenas concerning the origin and functionality of the Roman permanent army<sup>50</sup>, pointed out that circus didn’t just serve to distract people from worries but to avoid any serious internal dissension concerning the very system. However, even though Circus served in this way, as we have seen it attracted also violent outbreaks but without any precise political content. Besides, as the very Prokopios said, factions were present in the whole empire so it was impossible to eradicate them at such huge scale without provoking a general revolt even after very troubling situations as the Nika rebellion. In fact, they were perfectly integrated into the society in spite of their subversive nature. In spite of their unreliable character, sometimes factions played a military role<sup>51</sup> and in later times they became more and more incorporated into Constantinople’s ceremonial life<sup>52</sup>. In consequence, although their reputation was ill and the δῆμοι were considered a danger to the youth<sup>53</sup>, they played a conservative role with respect to the ancient system.

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<sup>49</sup> Translated by Lim 1997, 68-69. See Richard Lim’s analysis on this spectacular testimony.

<sup>50</sup> Dio Cassius 52.27.3-5.

<sup>51</sup> Cameron 1976, 105-109.

<sup>52</sup> Cameron 1976, 251-270.

<sup>53</sup> For example, Agathias *Hist.* 5.21.4. A different view in Libanios *Or.* 11.268.

On the contrary, pirates and bandits were conceived as undesirable elements to the normative society as they behaved as unrepentant rootless and permanent enemies to the *pax* and social *tranquillitas*. They were complete peripheral to the established order and so after being considered as dangerous parasites they were punished heavily without having any social alibi as circus factions. Therefore, the bands of bandits and pirates – who were called also *factiones* in Latin, but in a complete different meaning – represented a truly dark reverse to the established power<sup>54</sup>. Although sometimes faction members and bandits and pirates shared both similar criminal activities – and strategies –, and a common destiny, as they were executed by the authorities in a similar way, they didn't receive the same consideration. While bandits and pirates were chased without any hesitance, factions were not. They were part of the Late Antique system.

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<sup>54</sup> Both realities, piracy and banditry, were considered the same by Roman authorities. Regarding the concept of piracy in Late Antiquity, see Álvarez Jiménez, 2010, 14-36. Likewise, on both phenomena see also *e.g.* Flam-Zuckermann, 1970; Shaw 1984, and 1991; Hopwood 1989 and 1999; Tramonti 1994a and 1994b; Monaco 1996; Wolff 1999, and 2003, De Souza 2002, or Grünewald 2004.



## EPILOGUE

# LATEST VIEWS ON THE FALL AND RUIN OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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The fall and ruin of the Roman Empire in the West – because the Roman Empire in the East, the Byzantine World which was considered to be Roman, lasted until the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 – has been as of late a very interesting subject for Antiquity historians.

Some important books have been published. In this paper we shall examine just three of them (Ward-Perkins, 2007; O'Donnell, 2010; Goldsworthy, 2009), leaving several others for a second paper.

The book titles are quite significant. Two authors use the word *fall*, and a third one the word *ruin*. One considers this *fall* to be the end of western civilization, another one the *death of Roman superpower*. All three essentially study the Roman West.

The reason for the interest in the fall or ruin of the Roman Empire in the West is quite clear. There is currently a widespread sensation of being witness to an age of extinction of traditional culture, that radical change is going to happen, and that the fall of the Roman Empire shall enlighten the current situation. There are many papers that look for a parallel between the fall and ruin of the Roman Empire and North America.

### **1. The Bryan Ward-Perkins theory**

The author starts his book by recalling that, until recently, nobody questioned the old theories according to which the end of Antiquity happened because of the Barbarian invasions of the 5<sup>th</sup> century that destroyed the West. The German invasions that penetrated through the

Rhine and Danube frontiers, lead to the break-up of, not only the political structure, but also of the Roman way of living.

The Goths crossed the Danube frontier in 376. At first, they attacked the eastern part of the Empire. They completely defeated in 378 the imperial army in Adrianople, near Constantinople. In 401, the Goths left for Italy. Vandals, Sueves and Alans crossed the Rhine frontier in 406 and set out for Gallia. These three tribes penetrated into Spain between 409 and 412. The Vandals crossed to Africa in 439 and took control of it. The last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed in 476.

According to the traditional thesis, the political and military disintegration of the Western Roman Empire caused the Dark Age, the material and intellectual poverty from which Europe slowly recovered.

This vision of the end of Antiquity starts to change in the Anglo-Saxon world. Peter Brown published in 1971 *The World of Late Antiquity*. According to this outstanding intellectual, the late Antiquity starts in 200 and is characterised by religious and cultural debate. The idea of decadence was banished. Since the appearance of the book by Peter Brown, his thesis slowly imposed itself, although its acceptance has not been uniform.

The words decadence and crisis have generally disappeared from the language used by historians, and they have been replaced by transition, change and transformation. The German Barbarian invasions stopped being considered as a destructive force and started to be reckoned as a positive force for the shaping of modern Europe. It is enough to remember the title of the 1975 book by Musset, *The Germanic Invasions. The making of Europe. A.D. 400-600*.

The Romans, instead of rejecting the Barbarians, integrated them into the Empire, granting them a fraction of the taxes collected by Rome and the right to establish themselves inside the Empire in return for stopping the attacks. They became the Roman defence force inside the Empire. Walter Goffard published in 1980 a book with the quite significant title *Barbarians and Romans. A.D. 418-584. The Techniques of Accomodation*. Nevertheless, there was not always a peaceful integration. Sometimes there was a violent occupation.

Bryan Ward-Perkins considers that the idea of some modern historians is false, according to which most of the Roman territory was handed over to Barbarians in light of friendly treaties, significantly that of the year 419 by which the Visigoths settled in Aquitaine. Bryan Ward-Perkins objects that the territory the Visigoths were offered was very small compared to that what they later occupied. Barbarian expansion was very varied during

the Empire. Some regions were violently laid to waste, as in North Africa. The border regions suffered a more lasting violence.

The regions in Northern, Central and Eastern Gallia endured the attacks of the *bacaudae* throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Spain was plundered during the 5<sup>th</sup> century by the invasions of the Sueves, Vandals and Alans. The regions where they settled in a more or less peaceful manner, such as Aquitaine, also experience some plundering. Rome was sacked for three days in 410 by the Goths. The Vandals sacked and took control of Northern Africa in 439. In 455, they conquered Rome and plundered it once again.

Bryan Ward-Perkins clarifies the character of the Barbarian occupations, and does it correctly in our opinion.

The author examines life in between invasions. He gives importance to the facts about the life of Severinus, who lived in the *Noricum Ripense*. Life was very unpleasant. According to Gildas, the British historian from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Anglo-Saxon uprising devastated Britain.

The British historian believes some very hostile, offensive and contemptuous Roman attitudes towards Barbarians lived on for a long time.

On the few occasions that Romans defeated the invaders, they treated them very badly. Like in Fiesole in 406: some of those who surrendered were integrated into the army, others were killed or sold as slaves.

The German armies had a reason for resentment. Stilicho, a general serving Rome who was a high official under Theodosios, was removed and executed.

The defeats and disasters of the 5<sup>th</sup> century left Christian writers perplexed, and they asked themselves why these calamities occurred during the Christian Empire. The answers show that the 5<sup>th</sup> century was one of pure crisis, not of integration and assimilation.

The Sack of Rome in 410 shook the whole West. Jerome, a monk in Bethlehem, was deeply affected by it, as was Augustine, who started to write in 413 *The City of God against the Pagans* to explain this catastrophe. The Gallic writer of the *Poem of God's Providence* urged Christians to consider that catastrophes had been caused by their own sins.

Christian authors from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, like Salvian of Marseille, considered the Empire to be at a critical moment.

The disappearance of the last Western emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476 passed unnoticed.

Bryan Ward-Perkins thought about the issue of how and why Rome fell. It almost went under during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century due to the frequent defeats of the years 235-285. Roman superiority owed to discipline and military

tactic, border fortifications, infrastructures, the imposing road and harbour network and its control of the seas, which was vital for supply. These advantages were still considerable during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

The disaster of Varus in Germania, where three legions perished, has an equivalent in the campaign against the Goths in the Balkans of the year 378. The disaster of Adrianople shows that Barbarians were able to defeat the Roman army. The 5<sup>th</sup> century historian Ammianus Marcellinus writes that in the 600 years since Cannae, Romans had not suffered such terrible defeats. Germans were deployed in the Roman army and were generally loyal, as in 388 in the army of Theodosios I against usurper Magnus Maximus, or in 451 in the Catalaunian Plains. The West crumbled because it did not decide to face the invaders and make them retreat. The Roman position was slowly wearing down.

Gibbon attributed in 1781 the fall of the Roman Empire to Christianity and monastic life. This thesis had a follower in prestigious British historian A.H.M. Jones. According to him, 209 reasons have been given for the decadence of Rome.

In Wards-Perkins' opinion, the key element for the success or failure of Rome was economic welfare of taxpayers. The army depended on sufficient funding. The Roman army of the 4<sup>th</sup> century counted on maybe 600,000 soldiers.

It was believed that the economy of the Roman Empire decayed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nowadays, it is accepted that there was prosperity both in the countryside and in the cities during the Late Antiquity. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a series of disasters changed the outlook. Favourable conditions quickly disappeared during the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century due to the presence of many hostile armies in Italy, Gallia and in Spain, something that caused a fall in tax-income to support the army.

Civil wars and social discontent, like the *baicaudae*, added up to these disasters. Usurpations and revolts at home were closely linked. The East was mostly free of civil wars.

Self-defence had to be used, but it failed. For the Germans, fighting was a symbol of social status. Invasions had not a sense of Pan-German solidarity, and they had no problem in fighting against other Germans in favour of Rome. Testimonies of alliances between invaders are more frequent and were encouraged by the situation of dangerous conditions in the West during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Different social groups sought their supremacy, either through alliances or fighting with others.

Romans signed treaties with German groups during the 5<sup>th</sup> century in exchange for their alliance and the supply of a territory on which to establish themselves, but at the moment of assigning that territory, the

interests of Rome and those of its provinces did often not coincide, as in Northern Gallia with the land assigned by Setius.

The Western Roman Empire was sooner or later destined to disintegrate, but not necessarily during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Bryan Ward-Perkins believes that the East survived because of good luck, not because it was more powerful. The Bosphorus prevented German tribes from penetrating into Asia.

On how it was to live under the new masters who had won an important part of imperial income, according to Hydatius, slavery was imposed in Spain. Many landowners in Gallia were German towards the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century. In Northern Africa, a lot of land was taken away from its owners. Some settlements in Italy were traumatic. The new Barbarian settlers used their power to increase their wealth. The new kingdoms provided stability to the West. Life returned to normality under the new masters. Invaders penetrated inside the Empire in small numbers, and this left enough resources in the hands of the old masters. Many regions kept their old local aristocracies, like in Southern Gallia. In Northern Africa, little owners and tenants were also able to keep their land.

In general, Roman law, its administration and church lived on. The *Codex Euricianus* is Roman law. The brutal manner in which invaders treated Romans was also Roman. This way of ruling required the service of Roman civil servants. Counsellors and advisors of the German kings belonged to Roman aristocracy. There was cooperation between local Roman aristocracy and German kings, like in the case of Cassiodorus, adviser of Theoderic, and Paulinus of Pella, in South-western Gallia, who performed their functions in traditional Roman style.

In the end, the distinction between German rulers and Roman subjects completely disappeared.

Theoderic and his successors still thought of themselves as being different than their Roman subjects, and to quite possibly still be Goths, as can be seen in details of their coins. Contemporary sources present Goths as paladins of Roman culture.

Goths were probably not very oppressive in Gallia at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Generally, the population of Roman origin and that of German ascendancy lived together in peace. The barrier between Romans and Germans inside the Empire was important during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but not afterwards.

German invaders had to share the superiority of Roman culture. Romans were clever at encouraging Germans to adopt Roman customs.

Bryan Ward-Perkins lays down a radical difference between German culture in the West, and the Arab expansion in the East and Northern Africa during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, something that is true. German invaders had an extremely flexible cultural identity. They were very adaptable. The fusion of the people took centuries to be completed.

Peaceful coexistence in the West during the 5<sup>th</sup> century of invaders and those who were invaded was much more difficult than in a social club controlled by Romans, as has been interpreted in the latest studies of settlements, which is also true.

The British historian studies the disappearance of welfare. There were several fruits of Roman economy: Roman products were of the highest quality and reached everywhere and all social sectors. They protected themselves by carrying only a few products far away. Roman economy served the needs of the state and the whims of Roman elite, but not those of the majority of the population. This has changed thanks to the contributions from Archaeology.

Today it is accepted that Roman economy was characterised by an astonishing traffic of luxurious Roman products, and by a very significant market for high quality products at affordable prices, as demonstrated by ceramic, kitchen utensils, fine crockery and amphorae with oil, wine and salted products.

Bryan Ward-Perkins rightly thinks that the general outlook offered by ceramic can be translated to the rest of the economy, for example to the clothes, shoes, tools or tiles markets.

The British historian is interested in the impact of everyday life. Before that, he focused on Roman products consumption. It is necessary to briefly analyse production and distribution. In this sense, he studies facts provided by ceramic.

Ceramic production was subdivided into several categories that coexisted. Real amphorae workshops were at work, like those by the river Baetis, that were sending Baetic oil to Rome (Blázquez Martínez, 2013, 1-83; Blázquez Martínez, Remesal and Almeida 1994; Id., 1999; Id., 2001 Id., 2003; Id., 2007a; Id., 2010). Amphorae collected at Mount Testaccio in Rome from the late Roman Republic until 260, or the factories of the Graufesenque in Gallia that were active from 20-120, reached the whole Empire, like the fine ceramics of Aretium from the early Empire.

For ceramic to reach the whole Empire, it was necessary to have a network of traders and carriers by land and sea, and also maritime and fluvial ports.

During the Roman time, even humble consumers got quality products. It is a world similar to that of the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, although there was no purchase frenzy.

It has widely been discussed among historians if the main reason for production and distribution was having benefits or the needs of the state.

The state had its factories spread throughout the Empire: clothing factories and weapon plants for the border army, and a transport and distribution network. There was cooperation between the state and private people, and a sophisticated network of distribution producers. The state stimulated private trade in a subtle manner.

This good economic condition disappeared in the West, with the exception of luxury goods. Medium-sized and small markets disappeared almost completely. Ceramic proves this.

Fine ceramic disappeared in Britain and part of the Spanish coast. Vessels from Northern Africa were still being produced and exported during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, even until the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but in smaller numbers. Some regional potteries survived in Southern Italy and the Rhine basin throughout the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, but they were of lower quality. The ceramic circulation volume diminished, with only a few havens remaining, for example Rome during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rome imported amphorae and crockery from Northern Africa until the late 6<sup>th</sup> century. A lot of ceramic from the 7<sup>th</sup> century has been collected in the Crypta Balbi in Rome, amongst it a few African crockeries and 300 imported amphorae. The Crypta Balbi probably belonged to some rich monastery from the city elite. In the East, the story was completely different.

Other products confirm these facts. All Roman construction techniques disappeared in Britain during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This decadence was not as drastic in the Mediterranean. The stone and mortar technique survived in Italy. Tiles disappeared, except for a few elite buildings. The landscape degenerated.

A notable sign of economic change in the West was the disappearance of the Roman monetary system. Except for a small number, new coins did not arrive to Britain. The currency fall was less complete in the Mediterranean. Many German rulers in the West minted gold coins, some in silver, sometimes trying to imitate those of the East. The big copper coins from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century in Italy inspired the currency reform of later years in the East.

During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, copper coins were only minted in Ravenna, Rome and Sicily, but with a limited circulation.

The use of copper coins in the West during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries was scarcer. The history of Eastern currency is different. Bryan Ward-Perkins places huge importance on currency discoveries.

The end of the Roman world, according to the British historian, offers no recession or decrease – as suggested by some historians – but an important qualitative change that means the disappearance of whole industries and commercial networks. This phenomenon is best appreciated in Britain. Regression in the Mediterranean was not as complete as in Britain.

Bryan Ward-Perkins examines the causes for the end of welfare. The old economy disappeared in different periods and at a variable speed throughout Western regions.

A very different story is documented in the Eastern Mediterranean. Prosperity in the Aegean area had a sudden and dramatic end towards the year 600. Around 700, only Egypt and the Levant provinces escaped decadence.

The collapse of the West and the disintegration of its economy must have been closely related. Bryan Ward-Perkins studies the situation after the invasion had begun. He comes to the conclusion that political and military difficulties put an end to regional economies. These happened in Britain both at the same time.

The decline was more gradual in the Western Mediterranean, and no such immediate correspondence can be seen between political and military events. Italy had good spells during the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the impact in Northern Africa caused by the Vandal invasion of 429-439 was smaller. Italy and Northern Africa suffered, nevertheless, the same problems as other regions. The effect of Northern Africa in the disintegration of the Empire was less immediate and, maybe, mainly commercial. The professional army of the Rhine and the Danube frontier disintegrated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequent markets were regional.

The disintegration of the Roman state and the end of safety were crucial factors for the destruction of antique economy. Another factor was the plague that spread throughout the Empire in 541.

The Barbarian invasions of the 5<sup>th</sup> century created difficulties. Invaders did not want to finish off the Empire, but to be a part of its standard of living.

The life of Severinus shows examples of how it affected the inhabitants of a frontier province in *Noricum*. There were constant acts of violence. Local trade was impossible. Import of goods was very difficult. Oil transportation was almost impossible. There was no safety at all and it was almost local.



Imperial gold did not arrive anymore. There was not a single province in the West not affected by these problems. Economic sophistication also showed its negative side.

Lots of more or less specialised people were needed for huge quality production to flourish, like first class craftsmen and foremen for quality products. A transportation and commerce network was necessary for the distribution of products, and a big group of consumers and people to sustain the currency and road, ship and trailer infrastructures. There was never a perfected economy during Antiquity like that of the 20th century. It never reached the degree of modern specialisation. This specialisation was the direct cause for such a huge dismemberment of the Empire. The Roman world returned to plain levels.

The problem of the death of a civilisation is addressed below.

Food production may have collapsed the rapid fall of population figures. The number of settlements in the West was smaller during the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. A lot of empty spaces are documented. No catastrophic fall of population can be derived from the apparent lack of settlements, but neither the opposite.

With the disappearance of regional and international markets, specialisation and investment became ever more difficult.

Some historians maintain that the richer and more powerful population thus was at the expense of the poorer; an example of that would be Britain. Bryan Ward-Perkins considers this proposal to be wrong. According to him, the most remarkable aspect of Roman economy is that it was not an elitist phenomenon. All social strata had access to basic products, but this economy did not mean a happier world without oppressed people. Wealth differences existed.

There was a dramatic fall at the end of Antiquity in food distribution, the size of buildings and literacy generalisation.

Churches in Italy were very little from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century on and throughout the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. They rarely surpassed 20 meters in length. Data from Visigoth Spain confirm this. Construction with stones, bricks and mortar stopped in Britain.

These arguments collide with those of jewels. Luxurious jewels and expensive clothes must have been used during Antiquity. This is proven by the treasures found – like one from the year 450 which contained 450 silver kilograms – and the costumes from Egypt.

During the post-Roman period, writing and lecture did not disappear in the West. The use of writing did only fade in some remote provinces, like Britain in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Christian missionaries reintroduced it in 600. It never lost its significance in Spain and Gallia. Signs are scarce that the use

of scripture was generalized after the fall of the Empire, in particular the use of scripture on common objects like ceramic that were so characteristic of the Imperial period. Paintings on walls almost disappeared. Only the clergy had a high rate of literacy. There were some illiterate sovereigns during the early Middle Age.

The expression “End of a civilization” is not used nowadays. The term civilization may be used in the sense of complex societies. This is the criterion of Bryan Ward-Perkins. He has focused on the people from the middle and lower classes, and on those who had access to writing. In that sense, ancient civilization ended with the fall of the Empire. The civilization of the Ancient World crumbled down during the 5<sup>th</sup> and following centuries.

The British author studies the origin of the Late Roman Antiquity. The idea according to which invaders were peaceful immigrants, originated in Northern Europe and North America. Most historians who defend this theory are North American or based there. Many data they rely upon are from the Eastern Mediterranean, which was prosperous. They place the centre of the world for the 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries in Egypt, the East and Persia. That is a challenge on the mental and cultural schemes of Bryan Ward-Perkins. We believe he is absolutely right and that the American theory is completely false. It is a frontal collision against the writings of Orosius, which we cite later on, and against the thesis of Jerome expressed in his letters. Jerome repeatedly goes on about the Barbarian invasions and its destruction of the Empire (*Ep.* 60.16-17; 77.8; 123.15; 123.7; 126.2; 127.12; 128.5; 130.5). The author speaks of dismemberment and devastation.

The situation in the East is now imposed on the West. This theory seriously distorts the history of the West after the year 400, and that of the regions in the Aegean area after 600. The only way that the Late Antiquity can be conceived for the whole Roman world is, according to the British historian, to focus on the only positive change that affected the post-Roman world as a whole during the years 250-800: the spreading and triumph of the two big monotheistic cults, Christianity and Islam. Until recently, history of the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries was written from an institutional, military and economic perspective. The opposite happens in the United States. A good example of that is *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* from California. In a certain sense, it is a return to an earlier perception of the post-Roman centuries, like that of Christopher Dawson, 1922.

Today, our own world and the interpretation of the past are connected. The idea of peaceful Barbarian invasions is influenced by the German idea

and its intention of building a new and positive initiative after World War II. Pignaniol, the illustrious French historian, made the German Barbarian invasions responsible for the fall of the West, influenced by the German invasion of France in 1940. His quotation is well known: Roman civilization did not die a natural death. It was assassinated. P. Courcelle lays down a parallel between the recent past of France and the Barbarian invasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, with a clearly anti-German language. We find these two theories to be completely wrong.

In the 1960-1970 decade, Germans are rehabilitated. The Roman world was not assassinated by German invasions, but Romans and Germans together transferred many things that previously were only Roman to a new Roman-German world. For the European Union, the Roman Empire never got to be an absolutely satisfactory ancestor. The perception of the Late Antiquity as a sum of cultural achievements is also rooted in contemporary attitudes.

It is wrong to adjudge all empires to a golden past. There is no evidence of battles for freedom by provincial subjects against the colonizers during the Late Antiquity. The Roman Empire was brutal in its conquests, but it evolved and does not look like modern empires. The antique and modern worlds show similarities in regards to the capacity of the former to mass produce quality products and spread welfare, and the fierce and greedy materialism of the latter.

The new Late Antiquity is fascinated with the study of religion - the ascetic, for example - which has become very popular nowadays (Blázquez Martínez, 1998).

According to Bryan Ward-Perkins, the idea of a prolonged Late Antiquity has more in its favour than the theory of a peaceful Barbarian conquest. The 5<sup>th</sup> century was, in his opinion, witness to a deep military and political crisis, which caused the Barbarian invasions by overtaking power in a violent manner. The native population adapted to these new circumstances, but this was only possible under very adverse circumstances. He believes that the post-Roman centuries saw a dramatic decadence of sophistication and economic prosperity, something that had an effect on society. He thinks it is wrong to concentrate only on religion, what we think is true. We also believe that the fierce and constant battles inside the Church hierarchy between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the Council of Chalcedon, accompanied by frequent assassinations and destructions of buildings that have been very well described by Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates and Theodoret of Cyrhus – all of them witnesses of the events they relate – could have had a very negative impact on contemporary society (Blázquez Martínez, 2006, 479-755; Id., 2007b, 292-303; Id.,

2010b, pp, 327-355; Id.,2012, 23-275). The West escaped these battles, because Christianity had made little progressed. Instead, the battles in the hierarchy around the figure of Priscillian (Blázquez Martínez, 1990, 47-129; Sanz Serrano, 2009) created in Spain a scenario of fierce fighting.

But when Theodosios I made Christianity the only religion of the Roman Empire, he introduced some basic changes in society, although Christianity was in many aspects the heir of Roman civilisation.

## 2. The James O'Donnell theory

The book by James O'Donnell is completely different to that of Bryan Ward-Perkins. It focuses on three important figures of Antiquity: Theoderic, Justinian and Gregory. The subtitle of its Spanish edition points out the reasons for the collapse of the Empire: religious wars, immigrations, epidemics and indecisive leaders. The history of James O'Donnell has three acts: the Empire, which had not fallen yet; the Empire thought to be in danger of falling and which had already done so in part; and what was left of it amidst all the rubble. Each period has a principal actor.

James O'Donnell starts with a look at the year 500. Rome reduced its population. From a population of one million in the year 400, it sank to about 800,000. During the next 50 years, Rome lost half that number. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it had lost half to three quarters of it, at the time of the Vandal sack of 455. James O'Donnell estimates some 100,000 inhabitants for the year 500. Until the 470 decade, emperors had lived in Rome every once in a while. Only two emperors visited Rome after 500: in 519, for the Consular Games, and in 663. A group of texts from the early 6<sup>th</sup> century deplore the pillaging of buildings in Rome and other cities during repairs. The Palatine, the Senate and Theatre of Pompey were repaired.

Some parts of the city remained empty. Rome did not count on the usual grain supply anymore. The Coliseum underwent some repairs in 470. In 522, the Consul for the next year was allowed to hold *venationes*. The last *venation* in Constantinople dates from the year 537. The building fell in disuse. James O'Donnell attributes the decadence of amphitheatre games to the big passion for horse races.

He recalls that the Church of Rome had two Popes at the same time, Symmachus and Lorentius. The latter was a schemer, while the former was a hardliner. The cause for their arguments is not clear. Both appealed to the court of Ravenna, which ruled in favour of Symmachus.

Rome hosted some big events. Theoderic - who was *rex*, not an emperor - visited Rome and St. Peter's Basilica, even though he was not a Catholic. The Pope welcomed him outside the city walls. The retinue came in through *Campus Martius*. There was a celebration for the thirty years in power of Theoderic. He had been the ruler in Italy for seven years. For half of these thirty years, he had governed over a much smaller population. Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe, visited Rome during these days, and the story he later told in Africa about the stunning splendour and ritual has been preserved. The ceremony took place in the palace. The people were handed out food portions, just like the emperors did. The palace was renovated and the walls and other buildings in the city repaired. The wedding of his sister Amalfrida with the king of the Vandals was announced. Marriages were part of Theoderic's diplomacy. The *praefectus* of Rome was substituted. A conspiracy against Theoderic was discovered, and he ordered the beheading in Jerusalem of the guilty person.

Theoderic stayed in Rome for six months, but little is known about his actions. He set up spectacles that were compared to those organised by Trajan or Valentinian. He successfully ruled thereafter for twenty-six more years. These facts offer a good description of the situation in Rome during the period of the ruin of the Empire. Theoderic was the son of an Arian father and a Catholic mother. He was educated in Constantinople. In 471 he returned to his father in Pannonia. He attacked the Sarmatians, who were harassing the Romans. Emperor Zeno appointed him Patrician and master of the soldiers, the highest imperial honorary position. He was also appointed Consul in Constantinople. His people received some territories south of the Balkans, where he had intervened before. The relationship between Theoderic and Zeno turned sour. He stayed with his army in Constantinople in 486-487. The confrontation was favourable to Theoderic. In 489, he appeared with his people in Northern Italy. He started relations with the main dignitaries from Rome. Festus, a former Consul, went to Constantinople to recognise Theoderic as imperial legislator of Italy. In 490 they stayed in Pavia performing diplomacy in various directions with Southern Gallia. Odoacer, *rex* of Italy, fought a second battle near Milan, where Theoderic won. Odoacer retired to Ravenna, where he took refuge and was besieged. Cassiodorus, governor of Sicily and financial dignitary there, considered that supporting Theoderic was the most intelligent move. In 492, he took Ariminum (Rimini). In 493, John, Bishop of Ravenna, did a procession asking for peace. Theoderic agreed and then invited his rival Odoacer to a banquet and murdered him. Theoderic proved to be astute, resourceful, diplomatic and, in the end, a traitor. He also killed all of his rival's followers. It is

certainly true that Odoacer had killed the parents of Theoderic, who was starting to have control over Northern and Southern Italy, all the way to Sicily. He kept his authority through cooperation and taxes from all over Italy and adjacent islands. It was legal to keep a third of all properties, but this was not possible in practice. The reality was that a third of all taxes were paid to maintain armies and supporters. Taxes were increased, which was a burden for landowners.

In 497 Theoderic sent again Festus to Constantinople to get recognition, because he had brought peace, order and good governance to Italy. Constantine III, who was Emperor at the time, recognized Theoderic's situation. Soon afterwards, Theoderic visited Rome. He handled his diplomatic correspondence tactfully and skilfully. In 507 he assured Constantinople that his kingdom was an imitation of that of Constantinople, with a love for the Senate and respect for the law. He favourably solved the problem with the two Popes. Battles for power between clergymen erupted in Rome, where he intervened again.

The life of Theoderic is part of the Barbarian invasions of Europe. He was clever and astute in government and in attracting Italian cities and Rome. He showed up and to take action, something he had already done before the 470 decade, as a Roman citizen who was respectful of old traditions. His military actions were few and gentle, and were comparable to those of the great generals. He was a Christian by birth, an Arian – like his followers also were – but very respectful of orthodoxy. He intervened with great skills in ecclesiastical disputes in Rome.

The West experienced a sense of crisis between 420 and 470. James O'Donnell considers the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to be worse than the 5<sup>th</sup>, because Emperors barely held their title for a short time. After 284, Diocletian and his supporters restored the borders and Roman order.

There is no doubt for this historian that the Empire was not invaded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by peaceful Germans. He sees the battle of Adrianople as a huge disaster.

Until the settlement of the Visigoths in Gallia and Spain, they had never been a threat in numbers for the Empire. During the following thirty years, the Roman strategy was a mixture of unconscious games and cleverness. The best days were those of Stilicho, who blended strategy and cleverness. Alaric, king of the Visigoths, who made his whole career on Roman soil and who had a position in the Roman army, became king of the Visigoths. The situation got worse when the Sueves, Vandals and Alans entered inside of the Empire in 405.

James O'Donnell does a better explanation of the settlement of Theoderic's people during the 5<sup>th</sup> century and that of the Lombards during the 6<sup>th</sup>, as being the resettlement of a Roman legion.

The true story of the time is that of Aetius, a talented and energetic man with the ability to take advantage of the moment. He was successful in the West between 430 and 450. He made his important military debut as the leader of an army of 60,000 Huns who entered into Italy. He brought order to different borders through a series of campaigns, generally helped by romanized Hun mercenaries. In general, he made good decisions. In 451 he had his great victory against the Huns. He was assassinated afterwards.

The most high profile figure of the following years was Odoacer, a representative of the Emperor. He was *rex Torcilingorum*, *rex Torcilingorumque* and *rex Gothorum*, and offered his loyalty to a Roman governor. Odoacer ruled over Rome and Ravenna and favoured the senators in Rome. Theoderic was more successful than Odoacer and governed for twice as many years. He was very astute and very Roman in securing the means to tell his own story. He differed from Odoacer in his identification with the people on whose military loyalty he relied upon. Theoderic is the creator of the Ostrogoth identity. He had no rival in Italy. Contemporary people describe the Theoderic period as a golden age. Only traditional candidates, like Liberius and Cassiodorus, reached the highest authorities.

Liberius represented the Rome of Theoderic. He led its military forces and was generous with the Church. By then, Theoderic was the absolute leader of Italy, with control over all its routes. He won the loyalty of his subjects through good governing. He supported the senators and was in good terms with Boethius, from a noble family, the Anicii. His two sons shared the Consulate the same year. Goths were the invisible men during the reign of Theoderic.

The big achievement of Theoderic was the coexistence of many different types of people with the Romans; the big mistake was not having male children. The world of Theoderic began to crumble after the death of his successor in 522. Civility and tolerance were the main features of Theoderic's government in Italy. He legislated wisely.

His contemporaries were favourable to his government. He seemed to be a Roman ruler. He was also a great constructor of buildings and palaces in Ravenna and Verona, he restored the aqueduct of Ravenna and the church of St. Apollinaris Nuovo, the Galla Placidia mausoleum, and he erected the tomb of Theoderic in Ravenna.

He was very tolerant. Theoderic was cautious with his response to the Jews of Genoa, who were asking him for permission to renew and extend their religious properties. The answer contains a sentence that is very significant in terms of his religious politic: we cannot impose a religion, because you cannot force anyone to believe against his will. Another famous sentence to the same Genoese Jews: to obey the law is the fingerprint of civility. He was generous towards the Jews of Rome, and punished those who persecuted them. He was moderate and calm. He belonged to an old conservative tradition. All positions in the Ravenna administration were Roman. He not only named upper civil servants, but also the lower ones. A new position was the *saio*, a sort of ruler for everything.

Between 507 and 511, two senior civil servants were accused of witchery. The case was delivered to the *iudicum quicum virale*, who was created in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and was in charge of revising capital accusations against Senators. It is possible that old Pagan practices still lived on Rome.

Although Rome was Christian, Cassiodorus had difficulties with traditionalism, which kept Pagan buildings open, and with the absence of Christians.

Theoderic named people to supervise workplaces and expenses. He ordered Symmachus to restore Pompey Theatre. Romans liked horse races, as they already were in 400. Fights between rival fractions broke out in 509 which left people dead in the streets. Theoderic ordered the judges to hear both fractions. He did a good use of the Senate for thirty years, but it lost its usefulness towards the end of his life.

He took care of the thermal baths of Spoleto. Theoderic introduced a stable regime in Italy that maintained social and legal order. He guaranteed peace and defended *civitas* and tolerance. An inscription in the Via Appia calls him:

*Dominus noster gloriosissimus adque inclytus rex Theodericus  
victor ac triumphator  
semper Augustus  
bono rei publicae natus,  
custos libertatis et propagator Romani nominis  
domitor gentium...*

James O'Donnell believes that official Christianity was a lot more modest until Justinian, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, than it was afterwards. He studies the religious landscape of the Theoderic period and the changes it underwent, but Theoderic himself did not intervene directly. He dedicates



some pages to earlier Christianity. Theoderic did not end well, and it was in part his fault.

At the start of the 520 decade, he began distrusting more those who surrounded him, and rightly so. The planned succession failed. He had his grandson in mind, who was still a child. The real enemy who wanted to become Emperor was Boetius, the philosopher king of Plato. He paid for his boldness with his life. His father-in-law was also sentenced. These events took place in Ravenna in 524-525. Theoderic died in 526 of dysentery. In our opinion, his government was really good.

James O'Donnell studies the government of Justinian, the second personality he analyses, who is truly representative of his time. Justinian was nephew of Emperor Iustin, who had no children. With more than thirty years of age, he was already in palace. He was born in Macedonia and came to Constantinople with just two saddlebags of bread. He climbed through the elite body of the 300 palace guards until he achieved *comes* rank. He prepared himself to take charge of power during the government of his uncle. He learned the habits of the court and managed that Theodora was accepted Empress in 527, when Iustin died.

James O'Donnell dedicates a few pages to the history of Constantinople. Justinian met his spouse Theodora in Alexandria, a prostitute who did striptease, and married her, as Prokopios writes in his *Anekdotia*. In 532 he ordered the execution of two criminals of the blue and green factions of the circus. The city rose up. Theodora overcame the situation. Belisarios took charge of the issue and 30,000 people were assassinated. From this success on, Justinian was known as a cold-blooded killer. In 537, he built the magnificent church Hagia Sophia.

The great palace where the Emperors lived was located between the circus and the church. The court was the headquarters of power. Palace ceremonies at the time of Justinian were held in Latin, the language in which Justinian Laws were promulgated. Afterwards, they were promulgated in Greek.

Justinian promulgated three bodies of laws; some of them have reached until today. The most important of his codifiers was Tribonian, a *quaestor*. During the 530 decade, Tribonian and his colleagues collected the texts of Roman law. The first step was codifying the *Codex Justinianus*, a project of unprecedented ambition. This initiative maintained its strength in the *Novellae Constitutiones* of Justinian and his successors. This compendium is the sum of Roman law. Imperial power was reinforced when copies of it where sent out to the main cities.

Tribonian accomplished the preparation of Justinian's *Institutiones*, which was the officially approved text of Roman law. The *Institutiones*

date from 535. This coding was accurate with the past. After this, Justinian's *Epitome* was created, which was shorter than the *Institutiones*. These books influenced Barbarian law throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century, as in the case of Theoderic, and similar texts by the Burgundians, Visigoths and Franks.

Individual laws of the codes were collected in the *Digest*, which was the biggest and most ambitious project of Roman law. Justinian prohibited in 533 private teaching of law. Application of the law was in the hands of professionals. The influence of the court people was very strong. There was an aristocracy of professionals, courtiers, lawyers and businessmen. Many of their names are known and James O'Donnell sums up the lives of the most important ones.

James O'Donnell studies what he calls the birth of the Christian Roman Empire. Christianity was already the religion of the Empire with Justinian and Theoderic. Justinian wanted the restoration of the Roman church and perfection of Christian unity. He did not achieve any of his objectives. Against a divided Christianity, Justinian looked for a solution based on force. He followed the oldest and most perverse of Christian doctrines: there should only be one form of Christianity. The Emperor never accepted that different parties defended their respective doctrines. He also forgot that Constantinople was not the suitable place to impose that unity. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and start of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Antioch and Alexandria were thinking in more similar ways than they had done before. Constantinople had very limited success after the Council of Chalcedon. Antioch and Alexandria had adopted Monophysitism, a different doctrine than the one professed in Rome and the West. Chalcedon was unpopular in the East, which was already ripe for accepting Islam. The faith of Chalcedon was Orthodox, but it was irrelevant and isolated. Justinian favoured orthodoxy. He became fond of Theology.

Justinian did not have a true vision of the situation. His efforts to suppress Arianism in the Northern border and in Italy confronted him with Theoderic. Italy would end up in fierce wars between 530 and 550. A type of theology formed on the fringes of Constantinople, that of Severus of Antioch. The Syrian hermits did also have a big influence. Justinian made a notable effort to unite both Christian factions, and brought them together in the palace of Hormisdas in Constantinople. The Chalcedon supporters stood firm. Justinian tried to reach a compromise but failed. In his eight books *The Wars of Justinian*, Prokopios drew a sullen and quiet picture of the Emperor. Only once did he behave like a Barbarian.

He was a great Emperor and a hero, victorious against Persians, Vandals and Goths. The wars of Justinian ended all badly, but Prokopios

describes the events with irony. He also published *The Buildings of Justinian* and a scandalous libel about his time, *Anecdota*, which did not see the light of day while he was still alive. Justinian and Theodora were the least interesting people of the Empire. Many historians accepted that Justinian was as arbitrary and unpleasant as said in Prokopios' gossips.

Justinian died without children. He carried out his plans until the end. Prokopios slanders Theodora and Belisarios, the best general Justinian had. Justinian thought that loyalty towards the Empire implied loyalty towards a creed, but this was an irrelevant criterion for the loyalty of his subjects.

Justinian had no advantages to improve the economy. He should have pacified the Eastern borders. A Roman-Persian approach would have produced a more prosperous society. He could have equally planned a diplomatic future with the Western monarchies. In third place, he neglected pacifying and developing the Balkans, and in fourth place, he should have taken religion less seriously. These are the four points of what he should have done but did not, according to James O'Donnell.

In accordance with Prokopios, Justinian never fought a successful war. He wanted to fight those he should have not. He never ended a war before finishing another. He denied the catastrophes that followed his adventures. The Persian wars seemed to end in a draw. The African wars could be made successfully, but the constant uprisings were silenced. The Italic wars were not a success during its nineteen years, did not originate a stable regime and the cities were laid to waste.

The Histories of Prokopios are the public chronicle about the self-inflicted ruin of the Empire.

James O'Donnell concisely reports about these terrible civil wars. Justinian wants to restore the Roman Empire. His generosity with his native city, Iustiniana Prima, was an error and a waste. The spreading of the plague coming from Africa was fatal for the Justinian Empire.

James O'Donnell has calculated the following costs of the wars led by Justinian:

- He started his reign with 28 million solidi "in the bank", reserves that were accumulated by Anastasios and Justinian kept.
- The wars cost around 36 million solidi, with some interesting proportions:
- Around 5 million in Northern Africa
- Around 8 million in Africa, half of it after "victory" in the short Belisarios campaign.

- Another 21.5 million in Italy, more than half of them during the ruinous two last years of 552-554.
- Another two million in other fronts
- By comparison, income during a good year of his reign amounted to 5 million solidi. When Africa and Italy were added to his domains, they produced an additional 10 per cent or some 500,000 solidi each. Most of these incomes were spent locally in the government of those troubled provinces.

These terrible results raised taxes. They attacked their own currency, cutting the amount of bronze used in minting and thus benefiting the treasury.

James O'Donnell ends his study of Justinian's government with a reference to the plagues of the spirit, focusing on three cities: Scythopolis in Palestine; Salona on the Adriatic Sea; and Bracara Augusta in the north of Portugal. They lived a local sort of Christianity.

During his government, Christianity played a role in society that it had not played before, but the influence came from above and translated into fanaticism. Justinian was a fanatic in religious matters. His spouse, on the other hand, inclined towards Monophysitism. Justinian never gave in.

The third part of the book focuses on the world of Gregory (565-604) as a representative figure. This world is a very good representation of the ruin of the Western Empire. He starts analysing the situation in Gallia and Britain, and then moves forward to the time of the end of Christianity and the arrival in the West of the body of martyr Stephen and the relic of the cross. Christianity started being a religion of the people. Bishops started gaining relevance during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, bishops and other men inside the Church were people who had a good education. Books on the Holy Writings became widespread. During the time of Gregory I, the position of the Pope had been linked to the hierarchic structure of the Roman imperial government. A real bureaucracy appeared, with offices and documents. The bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria were writing for a distant audience.

The 6<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of the Christian book. During the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, monasteries appeared as centres of power and homes of Christian identity. Monastic life played a huge role inside the Church and in society. At the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, monasteries burst onto the West under Cassianus, with Lerins standing out. Monasticism grew in the East, it thrived in the West and it focused on private homes.

Heresy disappeared in the West, and around the year 600 Christianity became widespread.

James O'Donnell dedicates a few pages to Judaism throughout History. It was invented in the Late Antiquity and created the Babylonian Talmud at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Samaritans reached their largest prosperity during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The third brother was Islam, to whom James O'Donnell also dedicates some pages.

He continues his book by examining the downfall of Constantinople and the ruins of the Empire. The work of Justinian already crumbled under his successor Justin II, who paid the debts left by the former. The Balkans escaped Imperial control, Italy dismembered, revolts broke out in Africa, and he provoked Persia. James O'Donnell describes him as even dumber than his predecessor.

Justinian believed that Rome should not pay Persia for peace. Apamea was destroyed, and Nisibis and Dara fell into the hands of the Persian. The Southern border was abandoned in favour of the Arabs. The Mesopotamian border was a shambles in 573. King Sasamid launched incursions in Northern Syria and Asia Minor. In his indecision, Justin II tried to reconcile Monophysitism, just like Justinian, but it did not work. The Byzantine Empire experienced its best moment under his successors, Maurice, Phocas and Heraclius. According to historians, Maurice was intelligent, quiet, discreet, moderate, polite, rich, pleasant, charitable, and had no pride and arrogance. He tried to expel the slaves from Thrace. He worked in the Balkans for five years. He reinforced in 589 the fortifications of Carthage Nova in Spain. He supported the Persian king to regain the throne. He then fought again in Thrace.

Phocas refused to conquer the Balkans. He maintained the *status quo* with Persia, buying peace with her. Heraclius rebelled in 608. The triumph and failure of Heraclius was the Persian border. Damascus was lost in 613, Jerusalem in 614, and Egypt in 619. That same year he bought peace with the Balkans. The Emperors of Constantinople never understood that their interests lied in the Balkans. The army was reconstructed during the 610 decade. He reorganized civil government. The Avans advanced until right before the gates of Constantinople.

He attacked Persia through Armenia. In 627 he defeated the Persian in Nisibis. He also used diplomacy with the Ethiopians. The Persian government collapsed into anarchy. Greek was imposed as the official language of the Empire during his government. In 630 he went to Jerusalem to bring back the cross of Jesus. He fell ill afterwards, and during the 630 decade, his generals participated in the battlefield and saw how the most important borders collapsed. Heraclius died in 641 and his

Empire tumbled. The Arabs invaded Syria in 643 and Mesopotamia and Armenia little later. The old Empire still had the Balkans, Constantinople and Carthage. Justinian pretended to restore the dream of Alexander the Great.

The last consul, Basilius, gave his name to the year 541. He declared the success of the work of Justinian in restoring the Western Empire.

Gregory was born in the 540 decade, the worst years for Rome. He foresaw the end of the world and was the last product of the schools in Rome. He received a traditional education and suspected the collapse of Rome. He was an efficient administrator and an austere and spirited bishop who attacked corruption. He made efforts to improve welfare among his population. In 590 the Roman government lacked authority. He spent six years in Constantinople as an *apocrisarius*, a sort of ambassador of the court. He wrote the *Moralia* about the book of Job, which moves to compassion. He feels sorry for the downfall of Rome. For Gregory, human life was temptation and hardship. The story of Job is an archetype. He left over his *Dialogues* and sermons, and many portraits of contemporary religious figures of Italy.

He was desolated by the time he was ordered bishop. His letters draw a picture of Rome with no defenders, no supplies and devastated by illness. His fourteen years in power were sad for him. The Bishop of Rome was an important landowner in Sicily. He was the richest and more powerful man in Italy, but he abandoned his possessions. The people needed to be fed and the responsibility of feeding it fell on the Church. The little cities in Campania and Tuscany collapsed when they lost their bishop. Gregory wrote many letters to everyone: Constantinople, Gallia and the Balkans. He was also a good administrator and exegete, a great spiritual leader and a good writer. He imposed a spiritual and monastic discipline on the clergy. His successors forgot about his work.

He was elected Bishop of Rome at a calamitous time. A flood damaged buildings and warehouses in which the Church stored food for the clergy. The plague also devastated Italy during his time.

### **3. The Adrian Goldsworthy theory**

As we have already pointed out, the title used by the author for his book is a good indication about its content: fall of the West and death of the Empire.

The historian asks himself in its first part if the Empire was already in crisis during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The author does a very comprehensive analysis of this century. He agrees on the existence of the crisis and studies

how the Empire survived it. A single emperor could not yet govern the Empire, and there were two emperors who spent little time in Italy and even less in Rome. Several emperors were murdered by people close to them. The Roman Empire wasted its strength fighting against itself. The army was less effective to repel foreign threats. The solution adopted made matters worse. Gradual exclusion of senators and military authorities and its substitution by *equites* was done under expectation of raising the security of the emperors. In the long run, the contrary happened.

Emperors came from the higher ranks of the *equites*. The reduction in size of provincial garrisons weakened the chances for governors to undertake more important operations. Emperors had to go to war personally. Even Diocletian did not control this situation. Not many emperors were killed after 285. Civil wars stopped being such a common practise, but the stability of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries did not happen again.

We add that the crisis during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was deep, as can be deduced from the following facts from Spain. Work in the Sierra Morena mines stopped at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Gold mines in the Hispanic Northwest were abandoned around 235 because they were unproductive. The stoppage of mining exploitations in Spain had very serious effects for the Roman Empire, since it was the richest mining district (Blázquez Martínez, García-Gelabert, 1999).

From the mid to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century sarcophagus were not imported. The Barbarian invasions of the Galienus period devastated Spain completely, in the words of Orosius (VII.22.7). He enumerates them a bit earlier. German people crossed the Alps, Raetia, and many parts of Italy. The Alans went across Gallia and passed on to Italy, Greece and Macedonia. Pontus and Asia Minor were laid to waste by Goth incursions. Dacia was lost forever. The Quadi and Sarmatians sacked Pannonia.

Archaeology has proven the veracity of this statement. The walls of Barcelona during the Lower Empire have portraits, altars and inscriptions of an earlier time inside of it. In Tarragona, the effects of destruction were visible during the time of Orosius.

Drums of columns are built into the walls of Iruña, in Álava, just like in the circus of Augusta Emerita. Cástulo, in Jaén (Blázquez Martínez, 2011, 129-191; Id., 2013, 83-142; Domergue, 1987; Id. 1990; Domergue, Sillieres, 1977), where we have done 16 excavation campaigns, was completely devastated.

Adrian Goldsworthy has had a great idea in stating that the 3<sup>rd</sup> century is a time of crisis. Christians and Pagans thought about it too. We might recall at this point Cyprian's treaty to Demetrian.

The second part of Adrian Goldsworthy's book is dedicated to the recovery – with some question marks – of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He also analyses this century. In effect, there was a recovery, as confirmed by the facts from Spain.

At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the cities were fortified and early Christian sarcophagus began to arrive. Spain becomes full of villas adorned with beautiful mosaics (Blázquez Martínez, 1993, 275-379, 386-444). Owners of large estate show an important knowledge of Mythology. Mosaics have obvious artistic relations with those in Northern Africa and the East (Blázquez Martínez, 1993, 70-92; Id., 2012, 43-57). Spain was an exporter of race horses to Rome, as can be deduced from the letters of Symmachus (Blázquez Martínez, 2010a, 411-448).

Several canons from the Iliberri Council in Granada, which took place at the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, make references to a rich society, to owners of slaves (XLI), to Christians with estates (XLIX), to patrons with liberti (LXXX), to bishops, clergymen and deacons who work in trade (XIX) and to moneylending clergymen (XX).

Spain continued exporting oil to Rome during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but the mouths and necks of the amphorae were now used as construction material and they were not stored on a hill when broken.

The third part is dedicated to the fall of the Empire during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Adrian Goldsworthy begins making a reference to the *Notitia Dignitatum omnium tam civilium quam militarium*, the only document that gives an official report about bureaucracy and the Imperial Army. It offers much information about the structure of the Empire after its division. There is no other document it can be compared with. The impression this document leaves is of a very organized and powerful Empire, which was divided into two separated hierarchies - East and West - that formed one entity in spirit.

Those who defend that the Empire of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and, to a lesser extent, that of the 5<sup>th</sup>, is strong and generally efficient, rely on the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The army must have been some 600,000 men strong.

Adrian Goldsworthy believes that it is very hard to reconcile these facts with the course of developments of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sometimes, the state seems to be invisible and with no defences, something that brings up the question as to what extent the *Notitia Dignitatum* reflects reality. The author suggests several solutions.

In the West, power belonged to those who controlled the army. A key element was Stilicho. He was a Vandal by origin, but a *de facto* Roman. He married Serena, daughter of the Emperor's brother. In 395, the Huns sacked Persia, Armenia, Mesopotamia and a part of Asia Minor. In 397,



Stilicho saved the East with his army. Some Goths set up by Theodosios and led by Alaric, who served in the Roman military, rebelled. The Goths sacked Thrace and Macedonia.

Alaric left for Italy in 401, while Stilicho took care of the Barbarian invasions in Raetia. Alaric invaded Italy in 402. Stilicho came back to Italy, captured several important figures in the Alaric camp, like the spouse and their children, but did not have a decisive victory.

Alaric then returned to the Balkans, where he stayed for several years. In 405, Stilicho negotiated and awarded the Goth leader the *magister militum* status. The Constantinople Court did not accept this appointment. At the end of that year, the Goths were not those of the Alaric camp. Stilicho beat the assailants.

A usurper was proclaimed Emperor by the British army, but was assassinated by the soldiers. At the end of 405, the Sueves, Vandals and Alans crossed the Rhine frontier.

In 407, Alaric returned to Italy with the intention that Stilicho would offer him a better deal. The next year he demanded 4,000 gold pounds for keeping still. The money was obtained from the Senate and the temples of Rome. Stilicho had rivals who wanted to take his place, and they convinced Honorius that he should distrust him. They declared that the general wanted to name his son Emperor in place of Theodosios. The payment made Stilicho very unpopular. Upon his return to Ravenna, he was arrested and found shelter in a church. He was promised his life would be spared, but was executed. The spouses and children of the soldiers who supported him were also killed. The majority of soldiers changed sides in favour of Alaric.

Alaric tried to invade Italy and advanced until Rome, cutting food supplies. Honorius did not provide any help from Ravenna. The Senate decided to negotiate, but the conference failed. Alaric did not get a new command, and Honorius did not agree to hand him over Noricum or any other similar province, even without official command. Alaric persuaded Priscus Atulus, a distinguished Senator, to be proclaimed Emperor, and he himself was named *magister militum*, and a little later he dismissed the Emperor appointed by him. Shortly afterwards, Rome was sacked in order to reward his soldiers with an immense loot. Ataulf retained control over the Goths, keeping twenty year old Galla Placidia as a prisoner.

In 409, Honorius recognized Constantine as a colleague. The latter had invaded Spain to suppress a rebellion commanded by relatives of Honorius. Relations between both colleagues broke when Constantine moved troops to Italy. Ataulf moved out of Italy in 411. He settled in Aquitaine under imperial consent and married Galla Placidia. Never before

had the sister of an Emperor married a Barbarian leader. The Goths occupied Barcelona.

Once Ataulf died, Galla Placidia went to Ravenna, and in 471 she married Constantius, who was, as a matter of fact, Governor of the West. Honorius named him *Augustus* and his colleague, and Galla Placidia was named *Augusta*, titles that were not recognized by Constantinople. When she came back to Rome, she was officially *Augusta* and in practice a regent, which was a title that did not exist.

Imperial women played a prominent role, like Pulcheria, the older sister of Theodosios II, who was also *Augusta*, and was profoundly religious. Galla Placidia and Pulcheria did not enjoy uncontested power, because the higher bureaucrats and army officials amassed power and influence. Both women and Eudoxia, spouse of Theodosios II and rival of Pulcheria, were intelligent and capable, but their power depended entirely on their influence on the Emperors, courtiers, members of the Imperial House and higher ranked army officials. Other people could take their place.

The difference between West and East was, as has already been said, that civil wars broke out in the West and not that many in the East.

The Goth army size is unknown. Also, there did not seem to be big Roman armies. None of those who were in charge of the armies were willing to suffer big human life losses. To preserve their prominent situation they had to rely on a warrior force, just like other Barbarian leaders. The warrior gangs or provincial armies did not count on enough reinforcements.

Many wars were sacking incursions or skirmishes. Few big and well planned battles took place. Alaric did not count on enough military effectives to win against the rival army. The West kept on functioning like before the Sack of Rome in 410.

Imperial government was characterised by impotence. It was divided by internal fighting led by weak Emperors. There were never enough troops to defeat the Goths or other enemies. The weakness of the Empire favoured new attacks. The West agreed on the settlement of allied tribal groups in the provinces. The power of the Emperor in Ravenna slowly started to fade.

The Huns played an important role during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Their leader is still a synonym of ferocity and destruction. They inspired terror throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, as much on the Romans as on the Goths, but they were not invincible. They came from the big steppe, but it is not known why they moved to the West. They were not a unified nation – nor were the Goths and other people. The Huns had a great mobility

thanks to their use of carts. The initial conflicts between Huns and other Barbarians are unknown. They used well perfected arches.

The East was more exposed to an attack by the Huns. In 422, Constantinople resorted to pay the Huns 350,000 pounds to keep them calm. In 439 they demanded this amount to be increased. When this was refused, they attacked the Balkans. In 440, Attila and his brother Bleda, who had inherited the throne from their uncle Rua, disturbed the East and obtained an annual payment of 700 gold pounds. But peace did not last for long. One year later, the Goths sacked Illyricum and Thrace. Some walled cities were taken by assault with the use of battering rams, ladders and mobile towers, which were probably copied from the Romans. In 443 they devastated Naissus, where Constantine was born. Romans managed to expel the sackers and the subsidy was interrupted.

In 445, Attila murdered his brother and became the only leader who controlled a big part of Central Europe. He had many women. Several earthquakes destroyed the East. Constantinople was harshly damaged and part of its city walls collapsed. Attila thought that the moment for an attack had arrived. A Roman general who tried to stop him suffered a devastating defeat. The walls were repaired with great swiftness. A group of Huns reached the Thermopylae during his sackings.

The East bought peace with the Huns. Attila received 2,100 gold pounds a year and, for the moment, 6,000 additional pounds. They gave him - for the first time – land south of the Danube River, a stripe almost 500 kilometres long and a five day journey wide. An account of the court of Attila by Priscus, who was sent from Constantinople to deliver some fugitives, is preserved. The fact that interested us the most was that of a Roman citizen who preferred to live with the Huns because of the high taxes, government corruption and the expensive and unjust legal system of the Romans. Another embassy of the West arrived to calm Attila down in a matter involving a gold treasure from Sirmium in Pannonia, which the bishop of the city gave to one of his secretaries. Aetius had frequent contact with Attila and the Huns and he provided them with secretaries who wrote Latin.

It looked as if Attila planned to attack the West in 450. His power was based on generously rewarding his supporters, and for that he needed abundant spoils. Honoria, sister of Valentinian II and daughter of Galla Placidia, sent a letter to Attila in order to escape from a romantic affair, and begged for him for help. Attila accepted this marital proposal and demanded half of the Western Empire. In 451, Attila led his army near Koblenz. Trier was plundered, but he could not capture Orleans. Aetius confronted him with an army of Barbarians in *Campus Mauriacus*. Attila

did not win. In 452, he attacked again and marched on to Italy, where he conquered Aquileia and sacked Milan, whereas Ravenna escaped. He then went southwards.

In 453 he married again. The day after, he was found dead, probably due to excessive drinking that caused him internal bleeding. By 450 Galla Placidia was already dead and her sister Honoria also disappeared off the scene. The position of Aetius was weaker. With Attila dead, Aetius looked less necessary. In 454 he was called to a meeting in Ravenna and got murdered.

Adrian Goldsworthy makes then a very detailed description of the loss of Britain, which we have already referred to.

The next chapter XIX refers to emperors, kings and leaders.

Salvian of Marseille is very pessimistic in his work, in which he condemns wickedness, greed and corruption in Roman society. He states that Barbarians were a punishment sent by God upon Roman Christian sinners. The picture he draws of the Empire is devastating.

The house of Theodosios I had failed in trying to solve the problems of the Empire during the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century.

The West very quickly returned to corruption and civil wars, which the historian briefly describes. The kingdom of the Goths was the most influential power in the West because it was able to gather a stronger army. Africa had already been lost many years ago. Euric possessed his kingdom in Gallia and Spain.

The Eastern Empire took a long time to recover from Leo's expedition in 468. The West had limited and diminishing resources. *Bacaudae* appeared in Gallia, who were considered by the sources to be bandits. Some of their leaders were instructed people and at first there were members of local aristocracy among them. Landlords kept bands of supporters inside of their properties, some of them mercenaries. The world had gotten ever more dangerous and it was necessary to protect yourself by your own means. These gangs could also serve as protectors of tenants and residents against Barbarian invasions. They could equally be used to subjugate the residents.

Power tended to be more local in the West during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The regions in Northern Gallia seemed to have fragmented into separate units. Euric's Goths controlled a wider area. Other Barbarian leaders dominated smaller territories.

The degree of independence varied between kings, landlords and gang leaders. They were not part of the hierarchy of Imperial administration. Imperial power did not have access to a direct use of force.

The most remarkable thing in the West during the 5<sup>th</sup> century was the rise of numerous centres and figures of local power. This would cause the disappearance of the emperors in Italy. The reason for it was imperial weakness. Governments accepted the creation of centres of power in the provinces. Power was escaping from the hands of the emperors. Powerful generals and higher hierarchies frequently had control over them during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

A sign of growing decadence was also the rising prominence of bishops as leaders of local affairs. An obvious case was that of Cyril of Alexandria since 412, who frequently used gangs of monks to scare province governors, Jews, pagans and heretics. They killed philosopher Hypatia, who was a good theologian and also an astute politician.

The world was changeable. Adrian Goldsworthy mentions a series of famous bishops to prove that the world was changing. The historian describes fierce internal battles that broke out and led to the murder of Odoacer, which was set up by Theoderic, who governed on his own. The population of Italy had nothing to do with it. Power lied in the hands of the leaders involved. The only ones who could defeat the Barbarian armies were the leaders of other tribes. The history of the 5<sup>th</sup> century in the West was the history of Western Empire weakness.

At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the West was divided into several different kingdoms. Goths controlled parts of Gallia and all of Spain. Franks and other small kingdoms were in Northern France. Britain was split in different groups. Vandals controlled Africa.

It has been a trend to speak about the transformation of the Roman world into the kingdoms of the Early Middle Ages. There was change, but this is quite a deceiving idea, since change in the West was not voluntary. The new kingdoms were created by the power of their leaders. In the past, change was deep and harmful. Now, forces were more local, numerous and less decisive.

No data are available about population numbers, but it must have been very low.

The settling of Barbarians in the West was a combination of coercion and occupation. The new elite of the main warriors of the new regime prevailed all over imperial structures. Many local aristocratic families survived and kept their riches and land. It is often discussed how Barbarians assigned land. Some properties were confiscated. Two thirds of taxes went to the Barbarians, which was less traumatic. Data available are insufficient.

Assimilation of the newly arrived was not a quick process. A main obstacle for it was religion. Goth kings in Italy in Spain seemed to not

have made important efforts to convert Catholics. At the beginning of Barbarian settlements, the population was already exposed to Roman culture. Roman law prevailed in the provinces. No new big buildings were constructed, generally speaking. Some Barbarian kings kept on organising games. Water supply was maintained.

Those regions close to the coast and the Mediterranean were the more favoured ones. Change was gradual and took place during several generations. Latin was kept, thanks in part to the Church.

West and East distinguished themselves in regards to Barbarian settlement. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Eastern Empire was almost intact and had all its resources. It enjoyed great prosperity, had a large population and good agricultural production. There were no sacking expeditions. Thrace and Pannonia suffered enemy attacks. It was able to finance the army and imperial bureaucracy properly.

There were a large number of usurpers in the Western provinces. The Eastern Empire was not completely without civil wars, especially during the reign of Leo. Constantinople was the capital, the centre of court life and administration. Emperors of the East intervened on several occasions in the succession of the West.

There were no independent kingdoms in the East. Survival of the East was based on its sheer size, not on the efficiency of its institutions. It was bigger and more powerful than its neighbours and enemies at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to know the description that Adrian Goldsworthy does of Justinian. Justinian expanded the kingdom. He was involved in many wars. He conquered Africa, and took Italy away from the Ostrogoths, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and parts of Spain. A few years after his death, a part of his conquests got lost. He received a good education and spoke Greek and Latin, but he was no aristocrat. Sources contradict themselves. He was a lawyer.

Theodora came from an artist family. As a young woman, she was the maiden of one of the mime artists who worked during the intervals of horse races. Then she became an actress, dancer and prostitute. She was lover of the governor of Egypt and got abandoned. Afterwards, she returned to Constantinople and worked as a seamstress. She became lover of Justinian, but could not marry him for having been a prostitute before. Justinian had to change the law. She had no children with Justinian, who respected her opinions and had great fondness of her. She influenced her husband in the designation, promotion or dismissal of judges and army officials. She had detractors. Some Christian considered her to be very pious. She was also astute and vengeful.

Adrian Goldsworthy then examines Persia. Wars with Persia were the most important conflicts Romans had during the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

In 533 the Emperor planned the conquest of Africa, which was quickly achieved. This victory encouraged Justinian to try new conquests in the West. In 535 he conquered Sicily. During the next decades, fighting took place in Italy. Many cities suffered terribly. At the end of 535 he occupied Rome; Naples was sacked; Milan was occupied by Justinian's troops, but then it was sacked by the Ostrogoths.

The army won most of the battles in the West and many against the Persian. It fought disciplined and skilfully, although often pillaging could not be avoided.

The wars of Justinian in Italy were fought with a short number of troops. Belisarios was the victorious general of the wars in Africa and Italy.

The war with Persia broke out in 540. The interest in Italy declined. Belisarios was sent to fight in the East. He came back to Italy in 544 and reconquered Rome, which the Goths had taken under control.

Narses, another general under Justinian, was able to win against and kill the last Ostrogoth king in 552. By now, the troops of the Emperor were operating in Spain. Justinian knew how to take advantage of the weakness of the kingdoms in Africa, Italy and Spain, even though the army was smaller. The army fought in Spain with little results. He controlled Carthage Nova. In 554, Narses defeated the Franks.

Africa was the biggest victory for Justinian. It was a prosperous and peaceful region of the Eastern Empire at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Italy was lost a decade after his death and was invaded by the Barbarians.

The power of the Empire was limited during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It was not able to regain lost territories in the West and restore the old unified Empire. Generally speaking, Romans were well received by the population in the West.

On several occasions, generals were corrupt. Justinian relied on good generals like Belisarios and Narses. He did not have to face a civil war that would affect all of the Empire. Riots broke out in the circus in 532. Some relevant people thought that these riots could overthrow the regime. Theodora dissuaded Justinian from fleeing. This was the occasion where he came closest to being defeated.

Justinian tried to stop corruption, especially in the purchase of important positions. He had very limited success.

The most important legacy of Justinian was the coding of laws promulgated by Christian emperors that we have already mentioned.

Justinian, who thought of himself as the representative of God on earth, intervened in the definition of Orthodox Theology. He tried to impose the Council of Chalcedon, but his efforts were met with great resistance and the opposition of Theodora. In the long term, it was a failure.

Classical culture changed during the time of Justinian. There were still Pagans. History and poetry were disappearing. Philosophical schools in Athens closed. A group of philosophers fled to Persia, but they came back with time. There were lots of books. Pagan literature works, like those of Homer, stopped being relevant.

The shape of cities changed. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century, public affairs were dealt with in the *cardo*, not the *agora*. Churches exercised their attraction and baths declined.

At the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Eastern Empire had been reduced to a minimal part. Islam had conquered a huge part of its territory and it kept more aspects of Greco-Roman civilization.

The Western Empire stopped existing in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The Eastern Empire lasted for another thousand years.

The Visigoths created a very important kingdom in regards to culture (Díaz y Díaz et al., 1991; Fontaine, 1954; Id., 1973; Id., 2002; Palol and Ripoll, 1988, Sanz Serrano, 2009; Villalón, 1985). The best mosaics of the Late Antiquity in the Mediterranean are in Spain: Azuara in Zaragoza, La Olmeda in Palencia, Baños de Valdearados in Burgos and Noheda in Cuenca. The Hispanic Mediterranean coast received until the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century huge numbers of amphorae from Northern Africa and also sporadically from the East. The date for the end of this ceramic dismisses the traditional theory according to which the Arabs cut off the Mediterranean: this cut happened prior to them (Blázquez Martínez, 2002, 299-307; Id., 2003, 567-617; Id. 2007a, 521-552).

These three books properly reflect the different opinions among historians about the fall and ruin of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, we do not believe that the fall and ruin of the Roman Empire sheds much light on the Modern World. This world has factors that differentiate it from the Late Antiquity and determine it, like technique, industrialisation, commerce, the role played by the masses and trade unions, women emancipation, globalisation, etc.



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